11.2.1.05.

From the Library of
Professor Samuel Miller
in Memory of
Judge Samuel Miller Breckinridge
Presented by
Samuel Miller Breckinridge Long
to the Library of
Princeton Theological Seminary

SCC
2894

Presented to S. Miller
by the Author.

SERMONS

PREACHED ON

Sam^l. Miller.

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

INCLUDING

THE SERVICE OF TWO COMMUNION SABBATHS,

ACCORDING TO

THE USAGE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

BY ROBERT MACCULLOCH,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT DAIRSIE.

I now write unto you—that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. 2 PET. III. 1. 2.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY THOMAS TURNBULL, CANONGATE.

MDCCCIII.

CONTENTS.

DISCOURSE I.

The Devout Resolution, with its joyful consequence.

Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 22. 1791. before his Grace the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Psal xlv. 17. *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.* p. 1

DICOURSE II.

The enormity and immense number of mens transgressions.

Job xxii. 5. *Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?* p. 29

DISCOURSE III.

The Insufficiency of Excuses to extenuate Peoples Faults.

2 Chron. xxiv. 20. *Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper?* p. 55

DISCOURSE IV.

The equity of God's Dispensations, and the greatness of his Mercy.

Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel.* p. 80

DISCOURSE V.

The Death and Exaltation of Jesus Christ considered and improved.

Rom. viii. 34. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* p. 104

Communion Service, p. 131

DISCOURSE VI.

The Privileges and Duties of the Children of God.

2 Cor. vi. 18. *And I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* p. 155

DISCOURSE VII.

Dedication to the Service of God explained and urged.

1 Chron. xxix. 5. *Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?* p. 180

Communion Service, p. 205

DISCOURSE VIII.

The Happiness of the People of God illustrated and confirmed.

Psal. cxliv. 15. *Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* p. 226

DISCOURSE IX.

The Evidences whereby Real Christians may be known.

Matth. xii. 33. *The tree is known by his fruit.* p. 251

DISCOURSE X.

The Ends for which the Holy Spirit is given to Christians.

John xiv. 16, 17. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.* p. 277

DISCOURSE XI.

The Duties peculiar to the several ages of Christians.

1 John ii. 13. *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning; I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one; I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father.* p. 303

DISCOURSE XII.

The Importance of the Redemption of Time.

Eph. v. 16. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* p. 322

DISCOURSE XIII.

The Certainty and Solemnity of the Final Judgment.

Revelation xx. 11, 12. *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* p. 357

The distance of the Author of these Sermons from the Press will be sustained, he hopes, by the candid Reader, as a sufficient apology for any little inaccuracies which they may observe.

SERMONS

ON

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.

THE DEVOUT RESOLUTION, WITH ITS JOYFUL CONSEQUENCE.

PSALM xlv. 17.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

THE ſacred compoſition from which I have read theſe words, is inſcribed, A Song of Loves. It celebrates in the moſt ſublime ſtrains the praiſes of the ſpiritual beauty, the divine eloquence, the glorious triumphs, and tranſcendent majeſty of Meſſiah the Prince. Under the figure of a nuptial ſolemnity, it repreſents, in juſt and elegant language, the amiable appearance and ſplendid garments in which the Church ſtands arrayed, the conſummate felicity and univerſal joy accompanying their

introduction into the preſence of the Son of God. It delineates in ſtrong and glowing colours, the incomparable love of the King of Glory to his peculiar people, the dutiful returns of ardent affection and cordial ſubjection, which they yield with pleaſure to their higheſt Lord, and compaſſionate Saviour. How magnificent, how diverſified the imagery! how elevated the ſentiments, the figures, the diction! how intereſting the ſeries of actions, ſo connected together as to form a poem of diſtinguiſhed excellence, a finiſhed ſpecimen of that ſpecies of compoſition!—The noble purpoſe with which this beautiful Song concludes, expreſſes in forcible terms the ſupreme regard and warm attachment of the royal poet to the illuſtrious Perſon he highly extolled, as poſſeſſing unrivalled glory, and matchleſs grace. By his laudable example, recorded for our inſtruction, and the happy effects he foretels ſhall ariſe from exertions to perpetuate with honour the praiſes of our God and Redeemer, the ſervants of the Moſt High in every age ought to be excited to unite their vigorous endeavours, to accompliſh the object he profeſſes to have had in view. With ſentiments of devout admiration and humble gratitude, let each of us adopt the becoming reſolution, and cheriſh the pleaſing hope here ſignified by the man according to God's own heart:—'I will make thy name to be remem-'bered in all generations; therefore ſhall the 'people praiſe thee for ever and ever.'

In

In theſe words two things demand our ſerious attention; of which I purpoſe, through Divine aſſiſtance, to diſcourſe.

The devout reſolution expreſſed in the firſt part of the verſe, and—the joyful conſequence foretold in the laſt clauſe, which ſhall ariſe from the faithful performance of this duty.

I. I begin with ſhewing the import of the devout reſolution contained in my text, 'I 'will make thy name to be remembered in all 'generations.'

The glorious renowned Perſon whoſe name is worthy of everlaſting remembrance and praiſes, is the King whom God hath bleſſed for ever; the Moſt Mighty, whom the divine poet thus addreſſes at the 6th verſe of this Pſalm: 'Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and 'ever.' By the ſacred name of God is intimated his real divinity, to whom is aſcribed all the enſigns peculiar to Majeſty; a Throne, denoting his incontrolable dominion, which ſhall never have an end; a Sceptre, ſignifying the actual adminiſtration of his government by laws and diſpenſations, full of equity and benignity. By the love of righteouſneſs, and hatred of iniquity, which are attributed to him, he is perfectly qualified for managing all the affairs of his kingdom, with undeviating rectitude and admirable clemency. God therefore anointed him with the oil of gladneſs above his fellows, he conſtituted him the great Mediator of the new covenant, and furniſhed him

for performing the arduous work of man's ſalvation; in the execution of which, he was to riſe far ſuperior to all thoſe employed in ſubordination to him in this grand enterprize. The writer of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews quotes the paſſage I have now recited, to demonſtrate the incomparable excellence and dignity of the Son of God, beyond all thoſe by whom the Almighty had ever ſpoken to mankind, and his conſummate ability for accompliſhing by himſelf, without any foreign aid, our purification from ſin, by his atoning ſacrifice, and the benign influence of his Word and Spirit. Jeſus Chriſt, then, the only begotten Son of God, is the divine Perſon whoſe name the royal prophet, as a pattern to us, determines to make remembered throughout all generations. His name comprehends—The illuſtrious titles which intimate his infinite exaltation above every creature in heaven and earth—The divine perfections of which he hath exhibited magnificent diſplays unto the ſons of men—The tranſcendent glory of which he is poſſeſſed, that claims our veneration, love, and confidence. In each of theſe ſenſes is our Lord's name uſed in the holy ſcriptures; and in theſe ſeveral views we ought to make it remembered with honour and gratitude. I ſay,

1. His name includes the auguſt titles which intimate his infinite exaltation above every creature in heaven and earth. Truly venerable and amiable are the deſignations given by the ſacred writers to the renowned perſon whoſe memory the Prince of Iſrael determined

determined to perpetuate. To expreſs his ſelf exiſtence and immutability, the incommunicable name of Jehovah is repeatedly aſcribed to him, as in the following paſſage, 'Surely ſhall one ſay, in Jehovah have I righ-'teouſneſs and ſtrength.' The glorious name of God is often attributed to him in the ſtrict and moſt proper ſenſe, intimating that he is the mighty One whom the apoſtle of the Gentiles affirms, is 'God over all bleſſed for ever.' To ſhew his actual participation of human nature, he is ſaid to be 'God manifeſt in the fleſh.' To aſſure us of his readineſs to converſe with men, and of his ſpiritual preſence with his people, he is called by Divine appointment, 'Im-'manuel, which, being interpreted, ſignifies, 'God with us.' To repreſent his conſummate ability to ſave from the power and guilt of ſin, and to reſtore all them that obey him to the favour, image, and enjoyment of their Maker, he is named 'Jeſus.' To inſtruct us in the validity of his miſſion, and his ſolemn conſecration to his mediatorial office, by being anointed with the Holy Spirit, he is called 'Chriſt.' To inculcate his ſupreme dominion, his legiſlative authority, his powerful protection, and judicial prerogative, he hath 'on his veſture and thigh, 'a name written, King of kings, and Lord of 'lords.' To endear him to our hearts, and to remind us of our infinite obligations to him who came to ſave that which was loſt, the lovely name of 'Saviour' is given to him.—Indeed through every part of the record which God hath

hath given concerning his Son, his perſonal excellencies, his official characters, his incomparable grace, and great ſalvation are clearly unfolded, ſo as to give life and beauty to the whole revelation. 'To him gave all the pro-'phets witneſs,' under the Old Teſtament. He is the 'Prophet' that Moſes foretold the Lord our God would raiſe up like unto him from among his brethren; the bleſſed 'Shiloh' whom the patriarch Jacob foreſaw would come into the world; the 'Lord, and Son of David,' whoſe name ſhall endure for ever; the 'Prince 'of peace,' concerning whom Iſaiah predicted that the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulders; the 'righteous Branch,' in whoſe days Jeremiah propheſied, that 'Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafely; the 'Meſ-'ſiah,' who according to Daniel, was to 'be 'cut off to finiſh tranſgreſſion, to put an end 'to ſin, and to make reconciliation for iniqui-'ty; the 'Deſire of all nations,' ſpoken of by Haggai, who was to appear and fill his temple with glory; the 'Ruler of Iſrael,' whoſe go-'ings forth (ſaith Micah) were of old from e-'verlaſting;' the 'Meſſenger of the Covenant,' that Malachy affirmed would ſuddenly come into his temple.—To him all the holy apoſtles and inſpired evangeliſts give evidence under the New Teſtament, that he is the anointed Saviour of the world, in whom all the propheſies and promiſes, all the types and figures of the former diſpenſation, receive their exact accompliſhment. With undiſguiſed ſimplici-

ty

ty they atteſt the incomparable dignity of his character, they relate the aſtoniſhing miracles whereby his divine miſſion was confirmed, they record the ſublime doctrines and precepts which he delivered, the memorable actions in which his beneficent life was employed, the ſtriking proofs he gave of his tender compaſſion, the wonderful circumſtances and glorious conſequences with which his death was accompanied, whereby he made atonement for ſin, his ſubſequent triumphs over death and the grave, and the joyful tidings that he commanded to be publiſhed to all nations.

2. His name includes the divine perfections of which he hath exhibited magnificent diſplays unto the children of men. Every glorious attribute which ought to command veneration and reverence, every amiable excellency that can excite affection, gratitude, and confidence, is uniformly aſcribed to God our Saviour by the inſpired writers. Omnipotence is his peculiar prerogative. To this perfection of Deity, he lays claim in theſe words, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the Lord, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.' Omniſcience is affirmed to be his eſſential attribute; he himſelf ſolemnly declares, 'that all the churches ſhall know that I am he who ſearcheth the reins and the heart.' Omnipreſence muſt belong to him who hath aſſured his people, that 'where two or three are gathered together in his name, there am I in the midſt

'midſt of them;' and who hath promiſed, 'Lo, I am with you always to the end of the 'world.' Eternity is expreſsly aſcribed to him in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, where he is thus addreſſed, 'Thou, Lord, art the ſame, and thy 'years ſhall not fail.' And in the ſame epiſtle immutability is in theſe words affirmed to be eſſential to his character, 'Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame 'yeſterday, to-day, and for ever.' Beſides he is infinitely poſſeſſed of all thoſe amiable excellencies which render him worthy of our ſupreme affection, and aſſiduous imitation. By way of eminence he is called, 'the holy and 'the juſt One;' he is emphatically ſtiled, 'faith-'ful and true;' his love hath immeaſurable dimenſions, and ſurpaſſeth knowledge; to his abundant mercy, the teſtimony of God, the diſpenſations of providence and grace, and the experience of the ſaints unite in giving the ſtrongeſt proofs. Theſe, and ſimilar great and lovely qualities juſtly claim our pleaſing admiration and thankful remembrance, eſpecially when they are connected with his wonderful works, on which he hath left ſuch indelible impreſſions of his perfections as may be underſtood by every intelligent creature. By the ſtupendous work of creation, the Son of God brought all things into exiſtence. 'He ſpake, 'and it was done; he commanded, and it ſtood 'faſt. All things were made by him, and 'without him was not any thing made that 'was made.' He who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, continually upholdeth

eth them in exiſtence by the word of his power, through all the revolutions of time. He is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt. By the watchful care of his kind providence, he makes ample proviſion for the manifold neceſſities of his creatures, and by his ſuperintending influence, he directs their motions and actions to advance his glory, and the ſubordinate purpoſes which they are intended to promote. In the new creation his glorious attributes are ſtill more conſpicuouſly diſplayed. 'He maketh all old things to paſs away, 'and all things to become new.' Having life in himſelf, he communicates it to whomſoever he will. He gives new hearts and right ſpirits as he hath promiſed to thoſe who are created to good works, and thus furniſhes them with new principles of action. By the ſweet conſtraints of his love, he determines to walk with him in newneſs of life, and to approach God by the new and living way he hath conſecrated to his preſence. In conſequence whereof they are dignified with a new name, they become the objects of his tender care, he manages all their concerns, and defeats the hoſtile deſigns of their inſidious enemies. And at his ſecond appearance, when he will come to complete their ſalvation, they ſhall hear his voice and come forth from their graves to the reſurrection of life, when they ſhall be admitted into the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs. Once more,

3. His name compriſes the tranſcendent glory he hath acquired by his wonderful atchievements which render him worthy of our veneration, love, and confidence. The apoſtle Paul, ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt, aſſerts, 'that being in the form of God, he made himſelf of no 'reputation, and took upon him the form of a 'ſervant, and being found in faſhion as a man, 'he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto 'death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a 'name which is above every name.' In this remarkable paſſage is beautifully repreſented his aſtoniſhing humiliation, who being in the form of God, poſſeſſing the divine nature, the names, the attributes of Jehovah, and having aſcribed to him the ſame works and worſhip, did not reckon it uſurpation to be equal with him. This moſt illuſtrious perſon was graciouſly pleaſed to diveſt himſelf of his high reputation, and to be reckoned as a worm, and no man. Having aſſumed human nature, and being made like to us in all things, ſin only excepted; in the low form of a ſervant, he endured infirmities, temptations, reproaches, perſecutions, afflictions and ſorrows. He humbled himſelf to be born into this world in the meaneſt circumſtances, to ſuſtain the accumulated calamities of life, and though he had done no iniquity, he ſubmitted to a painful, ignominious, and accurſed death, to accompliſh the moſt grand and benevolent purpoſes. By theſe wonderful acts of unparalleled grace, he

he diſplayed the glory of God, he demonſtrated his love and clemency, his juſtice and righteouſneſs, he obtained the redemption of tranſgreſſors, he exhibited the odious nature and juſt demerit of ſin, he recovered human nature to the higheſt perfection and dignity; and acquired to himſelf everlaſting glory, honour, and renown. As a proper teſtimony of his merited approbation, God hath highly exalted him: He raiſed him triumphant from the dead, and clothed him with a ſpiritual, powerful, glorious, incorruptible body; the ineffable ſplendor of which, the ſun ſhining with meridian brightneſs affords a very faint repreſentation. He exalted him to his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come; he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church. A rich donation indeed; what dignity to Jeſus Chriſt, what a benefit to the Church! God hath elevated him to ſuch majeſty and glory as were never enjoyed by any other perſon. Whatever name of diſtinguiſhed excellence and greatneſs hath been appropriated to the higheſt orders, and the moſt uſeful offices; Jeſus Chriſt hath a name given him ſuperior to it. Prophets, prieſts, and kings, deliverers and mediators, have generally been eſteemed honourable deſignations. Above all theſe, the name of Jeſus Chriſt is exalted: He is the great Prophet of the Lord, the High Prieſt

Prieſt over the Houſe of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Saviour of the world, the only Mediator between God and man, and therefore juſtly claims the moſt profound reverence and reſpect from every creature in heaven and on earth. Eſpecially ought renewed men, who are bleſſed in him, to remember him with gratitude and pleaſure, who amidſt all the plenitude of his glory is touched with the feeling of their infirmities; is ever mindful of their intereſts, ſucceſsfully pleads their cauſe, and is preparing celeſtial manſions for their reception.

Such ſeems to be the import of our Lord's name, which David the ſon of Jeſſe foretold ſhall be continued as long as the ſun, and which he determined he would make to be remembered throughout all generations. That we may contribute our part after his worthy example, to perpetuate it with honour, we ought to call it to mind in every duty that we perform;—to make honourable mention of it in every ſociety with which we converſe;—to ſhew a ſacred regard to it in every condition wherein we are placed. I ſay,

1. That we ought to call to mind our Lord's name in every duty that we perform. This ſeldom fails to be the pleaſant exerciſe of thoſe who truly love this bleſſed name. Strongly impreſſed with an abiding ſenſe of the preſence and inſpection of God upon their minds, right-hearted men, like the faithful in ancient times, appeal to him with humble confidence in theſe emphatical

emphatical words, 'We have not forgotten thee, 'neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant; 'our heart is not turned back, neither have our 'steps declined from thy way.' Their firm and unanimous resolution is beautifully expressed in the following words, 'We will re-'member the name of the Lord our God.' In all the important services we perform, we ought to pay sacred respect to the authority, to the merits, and to the grace of our Lord and Saviour.

In the duties of piety and devotion, we ought uniformly to shew an inviolable regard to his great name who appointed them for advancing the most valuable purposes, and from whose institution, assistance, and blessing, they derive all their efficacy for maintaining intercourse with God, and preparing us for the sublime employments of the heavenly sanctuary. Let us then consider him as the only way by which we have access to the throne of grace with benefit and comfort; and fix all our dependance on his mediation through whom alone we can be accepted and blessed. And let us look to him as our all sufficient help who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, that he may perfect strength in weakness, and thoroughly furnish us for every good work.—In surveying the wonderful works of creation and providence, we ought to contemplate in them his glorious perfections, who created all things, and by whom all things consist. Struck with the awful magnificence

of

of the wide extended firmament, adorned with innumerable ſhining orbs, delighted with the riches of divine goodneſs diffuſed over the earth, and conſpicuous in the immenſity of the ſtupendous ocean, let us aſcribe glory and honour and bleſſing to their great Creator and Lord, who is the author of every grace and benefit enjoyed by the children of men.—In attending to the word of God, we ought to praiſe his divine excellencies for his loving kindneſs and truth, who hath magnified his word above all his name; and by his divine agency renders it effectual for promoting the moſt ſalutary purpoſes. Conſidering him as the beginning and the end, the centre, the ſum, the ſubſtance, the beauty and glory of divine revelation; let us lay hold on this key of knowledge, that we may thereby open the hid treaſures of unſearchable riches. And if his excellent name is to us as ointment poured forth, it will communicate that agreeable fragrancy which is the ſavour of life unto life.—In meditation on ſacred ſubjects, we ſhould endeavour to enlarge our acquaintance with divine truths, to impreſs them on our minds, and to cheriſh pleaſing affection for them; we ought often to turn our thoughts to him, who remembered us in our low and loſt eſtate. Employed in this uſeful exerciſe, let us contemplate with admiration and gratitude, the glorious honour of his majeſty, the depth of his counſels, the ſublimity of his happineſs, the efficacy of his power, the immeaſurable dimenſions of his love,

the

the incomparable riches of his grace, the extent and duration of his kingdom. Let us think of his terrible acts whereby he hath displayed his omnipotence in the conqueſt of his enemies, and his aſtoniſhing beneficent operations, in the ample proviſion he hath made for the ſupply of our temporal and ſpiritual neceſſities.—In preſenting our ſupplications for things agreeable to his will before the throne of God, and offering our thankſgivings for his everlaſting mercy, and the bleſſings of his goodneſs; we muſt never forget the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. In his worthy name we are expreſsly taught to pray, to conſider his perfect mediation as the ſole ground of the acceptance of our perſons and ſervices, and of obtaining gracious audience and anſwer to our requeſts.—In the Lord's ſupper, inſtituted to perpetuate the remembrance of his love in the Church, and to be a ſtanding memorial of his death; we call to mind the dignity of his perſon, the depth of his humiliation, the greatneſs of his love, his complicated ſufferings, his complete atonement, with his ſubſequent exaltation and glory; that having our minds deeply impreſſed by his unparalleled grace, we may be conſtrained to live unto him that died for us.

In the duties of righteouſneſs, mercy, and charity, we ought alſo to make our Lord's name to be gratefully remembered. By carefully abſtaining from hurting the reputation and property of our neighbour,—by the reſtitution

tution of what we have unjuſtly taken away,—by ſuſtaining injuries with patient meekneſs, and leaving recompence to God, to whom belongeth vengeance, we diſcover a dutiful reſpect to his authority and example, whoſe diſciples we profeſs to be.—By being juſt and equitable in all our tranſactions, and doing to others whatſoever we would that men ſhould do to us, we in ſome meaſure reſemble Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and ſhew attachment to him who loveth thoſe that follow after righteouſneſs —By acts of clemency and mercy to the guilty and the miſerable, by pitying and pardoning, by relieving and praying for them, and doing them good, we imitate the rich mercy which adorned the amiable character of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, by whoſe name we are called; we give evidence of ſubjection to his commands, we ſhow that the ſame mind is in us that was alſo in him, and that we are animated with him by the ſame meek and compaſſionate ſpirit—By acts of charity and beneficence, done to relieve the neceſſities of the indigent and helpleſs, and to adminiſter ſeaſonable conſolation to them who are in diſtreſs, we make him to be remembered, of whom it was foretold, 'He ſhall deliver the needy, the poor 'alſo, and him that hath no helper;' and who himſelf ſaid, 'It is more bleſſed to give than 'to receive.'—In managing our worldly buſineſs, we muſt not forget him in whoſe name we are required to do whatſoever we do, in word and in deed; to act from ſupreme love

to

to him, in obedience to his authority, according to the rule of his word, with the view of advancing his glory, whilſt we rely on his gracious aid and mediation. Not only in the buſy ſcenes of the day, but in the ſilent watches of the night, we ought to remember him, and meditate upon him with delight.

2. We ought to make honourable mention of our Lord's name in every ſociety with which we converſe. His venerable name is often introduced into converſation in a manner that is highly unbecoming and criminal. The profane ſwear by it among their companions, the needy entreat by it when aſking alms, the thoughtleſs blend it with their facetious jeſts, the formaliſt brings it into familiar diſcourſe, the hypocrite careleſsly uſes it in his devotions. Perſons of theſe deſcriptions ſpeak not honourably of this ſacred name, which is adored by the heavenly hoſts, and ought to be confeſſed with reverence and love by every tongue on earth. Our great Lord will not be impoſed upon by empty compliments, nor will he ſuffer his bleſſed name to be blaſphemed with impunity. How undutiful, how ungrateful, in men in any way to vilify him to whom they are infinitely indebted! Very different from ſuch odious practices is the conduct included in the reſolution expreſſed in my text. In delightful intercourſe with God, we ought to mention his name, his righteouſneſs, and his only, as the ground of all our expectations of pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace. In the

pleaſing

pleaſing fellowſhip we enjoy with thoſe who fear the Lord, and think upon his name, we ought to call to our own and their remembrance the matchleſs glory of his perſon, to whom we are united by the ſtrong bonds of faith and love, the amiable manifeſtations of his good will to the children of men, the importance of his offices, the excellence of his doctrine, the tenderneſs of his friendſhip, the efficacy of his death, and the glory of his exaltation. In our ſocial intercourſe with our brethren of mankind, we ought always to treat the name of the Lord our God with profound reverence, and to ſhew that we entertain dutiful reſpect for his authority, honour, and approbation. That we may give proper evidence of inviolable allegiance to our great Lord, and that we are ſolicitous to advance his intereſt in the world, let us, as opportunity offers, warmly recommend him to the cordial eſteem of our friends; and by the moſt winning methods, endeavour to procure for him their ſupreme affection and unlimited ſubjection. Topics of this ſort ought always to be mentioned with judgment and prudence, and treated with that propriety and delicacy which are requiſite to render them acceptable and uſeful. On every eligible occaſion, it becomes us to inform thoſe with whom we converſe, of ſomething worthy of their attention and remembrance, and to endeavour ſo to impreſs what we ſay upon their hearts, that it may bring forth the fruits of a holy life. There is great choice of ſubjects, and

of

of ways of diſcuſſing them, adapted to every taſte and fancy; and to get them a favourable reception, they muſt be introduced at ſuch ſeaſons, and canvaſſed with ſuch ſkill and addreſs, as may convert every emotion of the heart into the ſervice of real practical chriſtianity. Let us try then to incorporate into our converſation whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, let us ſpeak as well as think on theſe things. Habituating ourſelves to read the ſcriptures, in which our Lord's name is revealed, that from this pure fountain we may acquire a rich fund of uſeful knowledge, let us attentively enquire of whom ſpeaketh the prophet, and how is it written by the apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt. Let us calmly inveſtigate the ſublime intereſting topics of edifying converſation, and conduct our friendly debates for mutual improvement, with diſcretion, candor, and ſweetneſs of temper. Employed in this laudable practice, let us ſtudy the happy art of hearing our ſentiments tried and contradicted without any unkind affections, or wiſhes to injure thoſe who think for themſelves, though they do not in every thing think as we do. Let us liſten to their opinions without prejudice, examine them with impartiality, reject them with civility, or embrace them with gratitude and kind offices, which are far preferable to poſitive aſſertions and ſevere cenſures. At the ſame time, let us beware of countenancing falſe and dangerous doctrines, which have

have hurt the tempers, the ſouls, and bodies of mankind; injured their reputations, and deſtroyed the property, the peace, the liberties, and the lives of thouſands. They have poiſoned one part of the Church, and perſecuted the other to death. Through the whole of this buſineſs, let us prudently attend to circumſtances of time, place, and perſons; and carefully unite in this and every part of our conduct the wiſdom of the ſerpent with the harmleſsneſs of the dove, the wiſe diſcernment of what is expedient and ſeaſonable with the innocence and inoffenſiveneſs recommended by our great Maſter to his diſciples. In this manner let us 'ſpeak of the glorious honour of his 'Majeſty, and of his wondrous works; and 'men ſhall ſpeak of the might of thy terrible 'acts, and I will declare thy greatneſs. They 'ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy 'great goodneſs, and ſhall ſing of thy righte-'ouſneſs.' It is now full time to ſhew,

3. That we ought to diſcover ſacred regard to our Lord's name, in every condition wherein we are placed. The Church of God, over which Jeſus Chriſt preſides, like a large family, is compoſed of perſons among whom there is great diverſity of ſtations and conditions. By this beautiful variety in their circumſtances, the moſt ſalutary purpoſes are promoted. The whole bleſſed ſociety are intimately connected by affection and love; benevolence and ſympathy are cheriſhed, mutual dependence is ſtrengthened, kind offices are performed, and the

the happineſs of all is advanced. Highly ſatisfied with the wiſdom and goodneſs of our gracious Lord's appointment, we ought to pay the utmoſt reſpect to the allotments of his adorable providence, and to improve them for his glory.

Do you occupy ſtations of honour and dignity? Then it is eſpecially incumbent upon you to adopt the reſolution of which I am explaining the import. For this purpoſe, ſeriouſly conſider what diſpoſitions of mind you ought eſpecially to cultivate, frequently recollect what line of conduct you ought to purſue, that you may beſt adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour. Think of the peculiar obligations he hath brought you under, to advance the honour of his name, and attend to the diſtinguiſhing advantages, and opportunities, which in your elevated rank you poſſeſs of doing good; that you may improve them with fidelity and diligence as becomes ſtewards of the manifold grace of God. Endeavour to have your minds impreſſed with a ſenſe of divine Providence, and the many benefits you enjoy, and remember, that it is the Lord your God who hath given you power to get wealth. Employ all the influence that your authority, your example, and affluence afford, for extending the knowledge of his ſalvation, for checking the progreſs of vice, and enlarging the bounderies of his kingdom, that conſiſts in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.

Are you in low and indigent circumſtances?

Recollect

Recollect that to you who fear God, proſperity and abundance would not have been a real bleſſing, elſe it would have been aſſigned you, by our gracious Lord, whoſe name you alſo ought to make to be remembered. Foreſeeing that temptations to avarice, to luxury and diſſipation, and to other ſins might have proved ruinous to you, and that your preſent neceſſities might, through the divine bleſſing, become inſtrumental for advancing your ſalvation, he wiſely placed you in a more ſafe and humble ſtation. Envy not then the rich and the great, whoſe exalted condition expoſes them to many dangerous ſnares. The pleaſures and honours for which you wiſh to be in their ſituation are often very inſipid, whilſt they ſuffer many diſquietudes and uneaſineſſes of which you are ignorant. Power, and rank, and leiſure, and plenty, ſaith an eminent preacher who enjoyed them all, may indeed be uſed to excellent purpoſes, but prove commonly, in fact, ſuch ſtrong temptations to the worſt of ſins, that a ſtation leſs expoſed to danger may be the greateſt worldly bleſſing you could have had. Be content with ſuch things as you have, for he hath ſaid, 'I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.' The diſadvantages attending your ſituation may be uſeful to detach your affections from the enjoyments of this preſent world, and to give you a keener reliſh for ſpiritual bleſſings. The many advantages which you enjoy for becoming rich toward God, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom, ought to make you humble

and

and thankful to the Supreme Diſpoſer of all events, whoſe name in this manner you ought to make to be remembered with pleaſure and gratitude. Whatever be our condition, whether high or low, rich or poor, proſperous or adverſe, let us ſhew dutiful reſpect to his tranſcendent Majeſty and grandeur, profound ſubjection to his righteous dominion, and affectionate gratitude for his marvellous grace, who is infinitely worthy of ſupreme regard.

Such ſeems to be the import of the devout reſolution expreſſed in my text, which each of us ought with pleaſure to adopt, whilſt we ſhould do what lies in our power to carry it into effect, and to induce thoſe with whom we are connected to join in remembering our Lord's name and living to his glory. Then may we hope that the happy influence of our endeavours ſhall extend as here foretold to all generations. How noble, how enlarged, the deſigns formed by the ſervants of God, how animating the proſpects they open to view! they are not confined within the narrow limits of the time, and place wherein they live; they reach to the utmoſt regions of the univerſe, and the remoteſt ages of the world. We rejoice and triumph that thy name, O Lord, ſhall endure for ever, and thy memorial throughout all generations. As one generation drops the pleaſant employment of celebrating thy praiſes, another ſhall commence the delightful work, and thus the ſublime ſervice ſhall be continued, while the ſun and the moon endure. And after theſe

vaſt

vaſt luminaries are extinguiſhed, and the laſt generation of men have acted their part on earth, the celeſtial inhabitants ſhall make thy name to be remembered through all the revolving ages of eternity.

I ſhould now conſider the joyful conſequence which is promiſed to ariſe from the faithful performance of the duty I have been explaining. 'Therefore ſhall the people praiſe thee for ever and ever.' On this part of my ſubject your time permits me only to make a few ſhort remarks, with which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe.

The word *therefore* points at the intimate connection which ſubſiſts betwixt remembering God, and the grateful acknowledgment of his exuberant goodneſs—it marks the beautiful order, which God hath been pleaſed to eſtabliſh in his church, and—ſhews the peculiar honour he puts on the endeavours of his upright ſervants. To encourage them to make his name remembered, they are aſſured that they ſhall be then happy inſtruments of perpetuating his praiſes.—The people here intended compoſe that great multitude, collected by divine power and grace, from among all the nations, kindreds, and languages of the earth, who turn to the Lord, and declare his righteouſneſs. This deſignation juſtly belongs to them, becauſe they cordially ſubject themſelves to Jeſus Chriſt, as their Lord; they are intimately united together, by the ſtrong bond of love, they participate in the ſame glorious prerogatives, they

are

are governed by the ſame laws, and employed in the ſame delightful ſervices.—Concerning this highly favoured ſociety, the Prophet foretels that they ſhall praiſe, or, as the Hebrew word ſignifies, they ſhall confeſs the Lord. By this laſt ſenſe of the expreſſion, a very deſirable proſpect is exhibited, highly worthy of attention. The people, of whom the Royal Poet ſpeaks, with delight and joy ſhall acknowledge God, whoſe throne is for ever and ever, to be their rightful Lord and Sovereign. With profound veneration they ſhall confeſs his divine excellencies,—with affectionate gratitude they ſhall commemorate his innumerable mercies,—with devout admiration they ſhall contemplate his wonderful works,—and with ſacred pleaſure they ſhall celebrate his aſtoniſhing grace diſplayed in their redemption. In God ſhall they praiſe, and confeſs his word, that precious gift which he hath conferred on his Church, to aſſiſt them in underſtanding his providential diſpenſations—to give relief to their troubled minds—to reveal to them his bleſſed will—and to point out the way which leads to glory, honour, and immortality. This treaſure contains the good profeſſion which they hold faſt, and will not let go, the good confeſſion which they make before many witneſſes, to the honour of their higheſt Lord.

The word, however, is very properly rendered *praiſe*. 'People from all the ends of the 'world ſhall praiſe the Lord God Almighty,

'for whoſe pleaſure all things are, and were 'created; who is worthy to receive glory, ho-'nour, and thankſgiving.' The people who are created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, having all their powers rectified and prepared for this ſublime exerciſe, like a well-tuned muſical inſtrument, ſhall ſound forth the praiſes of Jehovah with him who took the lead in this celeſtial employment. Firmly convinced that the homage and melody of the heart is what he chiefly regards,—'they ſhall bleſs him with 'their ſouls, and all that is within them.' Deeply ſenſible of his infinite Majeſty and ineſtimable benefits, with ſentiments of eſteem and gratitude, they ſhall extol and magnify him who is greatly to be praiſed. In him they ſhall rejoice and glory as their ſupreme felicity, and all-ſufficient portion; preferring him to all other objects, and keeping him in view as their ultimate end in all that they either do or ſuffer. With gladneſs and rejoicing ſhall they triumph in his praiſe, whilſt, by a well-ordered converſation, and a holy life, they ſhall demonſtrate their ſubjection to the authority of his law, and the efficacy of his love ſhed abroad into their hearts. With the writer of this Pſalm, they are determined to walk before God in the land of the living. Though their mouths may be ſilent, their lives ſhall be a continued hymn of thankſgiving to him who formed them for himſelf, that they may ſhew forth his praiſes. Had each of them ten thouſand lives, they would unreſervedly devote them

them to the ſervice of their gracious Lord, and employ them in ſhewing forth the virtues of him who hath 'called them out of darkneſs in-'to his marvellous light.'

In this delightful exerciſe the people of God experience inexpreſſible happineſs and joy, which are greatly increaſed by the certain proſpect of their uninterrupted continuance, and everlaſting perpetuity. In every age there ſhall be created a people who ſhall praiſe the Lord; one generation ſhall praiſe his works to another, and ſhall declare his mighty acts. New grounds of thankſgiving ſhall be afforded them at all times: Beſides, everlaſting mercies, new deliverances, new benefits, ſhall enliven the grateful ſong, and render it exquiſitely delightful. Every proper opportunity for this pleaſant employment ſhall be cheerfully embraced, and faithfully improved; every one forming and executing this becoming reſolution,—'I will bleſs the Lord at all 'times, and his praiſe ſhall be continually in 'my mouth. Every day will I bleſs thee, 'and I will praiſe thy name for ever and 'ever.' And after having celebrated the praiſes of Jehovah upon earth, through the ſucceſſive revolutions of time, all the innumerable multitude of the redeemed from among men, with united hearts and voices, ſhall for ever ſing to the honour of their Lord and Saviour, for the victories he hath obtained, the mercies he hath beſtowed, and the ſalvation he hath wrought. Glorious proſpect! Who

would not determine to make our Lord's name remembered throughout all generations, in the pleaſing hope that the people ſhall praiſe him for ever and ever?—Ye children of diſobedience, who have hitherto been forgetful of the Father of mercies, and the God of your lives, be henceforth ſolicitous, that ye may be happily diſpoſed to remember, and to make to be remembered, that bleſſed name of which ye have been unmindful. Ye children of the Moſt High, who have thought upon his name, and have often recommended it to the attention of thoſe around you, perſevere in the delightful employment, animated by the reviving conſideration, that men ſhall be bleſſed in him, and all nations ſhall call him bleſſed. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

SERMON

SERMON II.

THE ENORMITY AND IMMENSE NUMBER OF MENS TRANSGRESSIONS.

JOB xxii. 5.

Is not thy wickedneſs great, and thine iniquities infinite?

THESE important queſtions demand ſerious conſideration, eſpecially when we are profeſſedly employed in humbling ourſelves for our ſins in the preſence of God. The firſt relates to the atrocity, and the latter to the number of our tranſgreſſions. Each of them were propoſed to upright Job by his friend Eliphaz the Temanite, not to intimate that the matter was dubious, but that by this form of addreſs he might awaken attention to theſe ſubjects, and leave them to the deciſion of a well-informed mind and unbiaſſed judgment. The mode of expreſſion which he adopts, is of the ſame import with the ſtrongeſt affirmation; it is more emphatical and energetic than the moſt explicit aſſertion. Many inſtances occur in ſcripture, where plain indubitable truths are ſtated in a queſtionary form. King Solomon, in his ſolemn prayer at the dedica-

tion of the temple, uſed theſe forcible words: 'Who is there that ſinneth not?' And in his book of Proverbs, he aſks, 'Who can ſay, I 'am clean from my ſin?' The wiſe man certainly meant, that there is not an individual of mankind who is without ſin, who is not tainted by iniquity. In like manner, the interrogations in my text muſt be underſtood as poſitively aſſerting, in perfect conſiſtency with other paſſages of the ſacred writings, the immenſe magnitude, and innumerable multitude of the ſins wherewith every man is chargeable before God. With this view, I purpoſe, through divine aſſiſtance, to lay before you ſome of the evidences whereby theſe humbling truths are eſtabliſhed; which I earneſtly pray that God may deeply impreſs on all our hearts, and render conducive to our ſpiritual benefit.

I hope there are not any of you, my brethren, who will be offended, when, with affectionate concern for promoting your beſt intereſts, I addreſs you in the words of Eliphaz to Job,—'Is not thy wickedneſs great? are 'not thine iniquities infinite?' Do any of you ſuppoſe that your opulence ſhould exempt you from this pointed enquiry? Are you in more affluent circumſtances than was the greateſt man in the eaſt, of whoſe large poſſeſſions, and vaſt houſehold you read in the beginning of this ſacred book? Do you reckon that your high ſtation, and the reſpect you have acquired from thoſe among whom you live, render it unneceſſary for you to attend to the queſtions

we

we are now to diſcuſs? Are you more honourable, and more revered than he whom God bleſſed in the work of his hands, and increaſed in ſubſtance; in whoſe preſence 'the 'aged aroſe, and ſtood up, and the nobles held 'their peace; who, when the ear heard him, 'then it bleſſed him; and when the eye ſaw 'him, it gave witneſs to him?' Do you imagine that the uprightneſs of your hearts, and the integrity of your conduct ought to free you from the charge before us, which it is my buſineſs to bring home to your conſciences? Have you conſidered God's ſervant, againſt whom it was primarily directed; of whom he teſtified, 'There was none like him in the 'earth; a perfect and upright man; one that 'feared God, and eſchewed evil;—who put 'on righteouſneſs, and it clothed him; whoſe 'judgment was as a robe and a diadem;' of whoſe patience you have all heard? Nor were the queſtions, now to be conſidered, propoſed to this good man by an incenſed enemy, an invidious enthuſiaſt, or gloomy bigot, who knew not what he ſaid, nor whereof he affirmed. Theſe queries were put to him by one of his chief friends, who candidly acknowledged the favourable opinion he entertained of his integrity, who himſelf was an intelligent man, that delivered ſublime ſentiments concerning God and his providence, which are recorded for our inſtruction. He had come from a place that was renowned for wiſdom and literature, with the friendly deſign of com-

miſerating with the ſervant of God in his ſorrows, and of conveying reviving conſolations into his heart. To each of you then, my brethren, I am fully authorized to put the queſtions ſuggeſted in my text,—'Is not thy 'wickedneſs great, and thine iniquities infi-'nite?'

That you may clearly perceive the import and evidence of the firſt article in the charge, it may not be improper to obſerve, that the word tranſlated *wickedneſs*, denotes thoſe enormous crimes whereby we not only deſtroy ourſelves, injure our brethren, and offend God, but proudly ſpurn at his ſacred authority, and preſumptuouſly tranſgreſs his juſt commandments. Such wickedneſs is truly great, inaſmuch as we thereby contemn the glorious perfections of Jehovah,—we violate his righteous laws,—we abuſe his manifold mercies,—we deſpiſe his awful judgments,—and counteract the bleſſed deſign of the grace of God revealed in the goſpel. To excite your deteſtation of all manner of wickedneſs, to awaken your godly ſorrow for ſin, and to rouſe you to future vigilance againſt every ſpecies of deliberate tranſgreſſion, I ſhall repreſent, under theſe particulars, the enormity and aggravations wherewith they are attended.—Is not your wickedneſs great? for thereby,

1. You have contemned the glorious perfections of Jehovah; you have diſregarded the inſpection of the omniſcient God, who from heaven beholdeth all the ſons of men. Every

treſpaſs

treſpaſs that ever you committed in the moſt ſecret tranſactions, though artfully concealed from your fellow creatures, was done in his ſight, whoſe eyes are 'in every place, beholding 'the evil and the good, to whom the darkneſs 'and the light are alike.'—You have acted in direct oppoſition to his perfect purity, who hath commanded you to be holy, as he is holy. Inſtead of admiring, adoring, and imitating this grand and amiable attribute of the divine nature, which would have conſtituted your higheſt honour, and trueſt glory, it hath excited your averſion and terror. By the practice of atrocious ſins, you have encreaſed your natural deformity and pollution, whilſt you have rendered yourſelves offenſive to him whom you ought to have ſerved in the beauties of holineſs.—You have deſpiſed the wiſdom of the Moſt High, who hath ſhewn you the way wherein you ought to walk, in which are to be enjoyed the moſt deſirable tranquillity, and the moſt ſublime pleaſures. Confident in your own underſtanding, and inſenſible of your need of divine conduct, you have walked after the counſels of your own hearts. Preferring the dictates of your own corrupt minds to the maxims of eternal truth, you have acted as if you were capable of directing yourſelves, and providing for your own happineſs.—You have ſet at nought the omnipotence of your Creator, and provoked the Lord to jealouſy, as if you were ſtronger than he, and able to reſiſt his almighty arm, to whom vengeance belongeth.

By violating the beautiful order he hath eſtabliſhed—by doing what he hath prohibited—by neglecting to obey what he hath required—and making light of what he hath offered: you have forgotten the Lord your Maker, who 'ſtretched forth the heavens, and laid the foun-'dations of the earth:'—You have ſlighted the faithfulneſs of God, who hath ſolemnly declared, that 'though hand join in hand, the 'wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed; that heaven 'and earth ſhall paſs away, but his words ſhall 'not paſs away.' Unawed by the terrible threatenings denounced againſt tranſgreſſion; unmoved by the exceeding great and precious promiſes annexed to patient continuance in well-doing; you have ſinned againſt the Lord, and ruined your own ſouls.—You have alſo reproached the righteouſneſs of the Supreme Judge of all the earth, who will render to every one according to his work. Unmindful of the wrath of the Almighty, and the everlaſting puniſhment to which ſin expoſes, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who will repay fury to his adverſaries, and recompence to his enemies; you have gone on in your treſpaſſes, and multiplied your iniquities. I might add more particulars on this head, but I truſt enough hath been ſaid to ſhew the malignant nature of wickedneſs, as it contemns the glorious attributes of God, which ought to be the objects of our adoration and praiſe.

2. You have violated the righteous laws of God.

God. He hath been graciouſly pleaſed to give us laws which are holy, juſt, and good; holy, as they contain a perfect tranſcript of his immaculate purity, an explicit declaration of his bleſſed will—juſt in all their demands, which are unqueſtionably equitable and righteous—and good, as they require whatſoever is excellent and praiſe-worthy, and prohibit every thing that is evil and pernicious. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes. It is admirably ſuited to our rational nature, touching all the ſprings of human action; it is well adapted to our preſent circumſtances, being deſigned to regulate not only our external conduct, but our inward affections, and to promote our true happineſs and comfort. It commands us to love the Lord our God with all our ſoul, heart, and mind, and to expreſs ſupreme affection for him, by that ſacred veneration and worſhip, that reverence and homage, which he moſt juſtly claims. It requires, that we love our neighbours as ourſelves, and demonſtrate this tender regard in every capacity, —that we endeavour in every reſpect to promote their welfare, and that we ſuppreſs every malevolent paſſion and irregular appetite. What an evil and abominable thing is wickedneſs, which invades the ſacred rights of the one great Lawgiver, encroaches on his dominion, and deprives him of that obedience and ſubjection to which he is unqueſtionably entitled? It preſumptuouſly refuſes to honour him

in

in whom you live, and move, and have your being; it plucks from his hand the ſceptre of righteouſneſs, and oppoſes his glorious ſovereignty, to which every creature ought to bow. By wickedly departing from the commandments of the Lord your God, you have turned to him the back, and not the face; you have forſaken the fountain of living water, and incurred the wrath and curſe of the Almighty. You have refuſed obedience to thoſe divine commands which in your hearts you muſt approve, and that require thoſe things which are good and profitable to men. What ſtatutes can be more equitable and excellent than thoſe which you have perverſely tranſgreſſed? Is it not highly reaſonable and juſt, that you ſhould have abhored idols, that you ſhould have devoutly worſhipped the Lord our God, reverenced his name, and ſanctified his ſabbaths?—that you ſhould have honoured thoſe whom God hath appointed you to obey?—that you ſhould have endeavoured to preſerve your own life, and that of your neighbour?—that you ſhould have abſtained from impurity, fraud, falſehood, ſlander, and covetouſneſs? Notwithſtanding you were fully ſatisfied of the propriety and goodneſs of the law of God, have not you violated its precepts, times without number? Though encouraged to the duties of obedience, by aſſurances of divine aid, and acceptance through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by the ſublime pleaſure with which they are accompanied, and the glorious proſpects exhibited in the goſpel, you have

have ſinned, and done wickedly. You have renounced allegiance to your rightful ſovereign; you have withheld the honour due to the Father of Spirits, you have ſtopt the delightful intercourſe which ought to have ſubſiſted betwixt you and the Giver of all good, you have put arms into the hands of your enemies, you have burſt aſunder the moſt sacred obligations, you have introduced the moſt dangerous diſorders into your conſtitution, you have poiſoned your comforts, and embittered your afflictions, you have perverted the beſt laws to the worſt purpoſes, and have indeed deſtroyed yourſelves. Language is inſufficient to expreſs the extreme folly, the odious nature, and dreadful effects of that wickedneſs which tramples upon the divine law.

3. You have abuſed the manifold mercies of God. How innumerable, how ineſtimable, the benefits you have received from the Father of lights! Mercies were laid in the very foundation of your exiſtence, when you were formed with intelligent ſpirits, which are capable of maintaining intercourſe with God, and thoſe beautifully organized bodies wherein they reſide. Having introduced you into this ſtately well furniſhed habitation, over which he hath ſtretched the ſpacious canopy of heaven, enlightened and adorned with the moſt ſplendid luminaries; he provided for you ſprings of water, which you digged not; bread and raiment, which you earned not; fruits and herbs, which you planted not. When the arrows of death

death were fleeing thick around you, he mercifully ſpared you, and brought you to this day. Freſh oil hath been daily conveyed into your lamp of life, to keep it alive, which rightly conſidered, is no leſs wonderful, than that the widow woman's cruiſe of oil did not fail, upon which ſhe daily ſubſiſted. When the ſtorm of affliction hath aſſailed you, and threatened you with imminent danger, the Almighty hath rebuked the tempeſt, repaired your ſhattered conſtitution, and ſent you out into the world as ſound and ſtrong as ever. The God of your life hath given you a habitation, in which you reſide, which is more than Jeſus Chriſt had in the days of his humiliation, and hath continued to allow you poſſeſſion of it, notwithſtanding you have ungratefully refuſed to pay him the homage he juſtly demands.—Are you in affluent circumſtances? it is God who gave you power to get wealth: Have you reputation? it is God that exalted you to the reſpectability, and credit which you poſſeſs: Do you enjoy the ſociety of agreeable friends? for this comfort, you are indebted to that God, who gave Joſeph 'favour in the eyes of Pharaoh:' Have you had ſucceſs in buſineſs? this alſo cometh from the Lord of hoſts, who is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working: Have you derived benefit from the variegated diſpenſations of Providence? it is God who hath made them work together for your good: Do you enjoy the glorious goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt? it is made known to you for the obedience of faith,

faith, according to the commandment of the everlaſting God!—Say then, my brethren, how great muſt be the wickedneſs which perverts and abuſes all this profuſion of unmerited kindneſs, all theſe precious benefits. 'Many, O 'Lord my God, are thy wonderful works 'which thou haſt done, and thy gracious 'thoughts to us-ward; they cannot be reckon-'ed up in order unto thee; if I would ſpeak, 'and declare them, they are more than can be 'numbered.'

Notwithſtanding the mercies of God have been new to you every morning, and every evening, and he hath loaded you with benefits, have not 'the thoughts of the imaginations of your hearts 'been only evil, and that continually?' have not you loaded him with your ſins? Have not you often converted the bleſſings, wherewith you have been favoured, into weapons of rebellion againſt the bountiful Giver? Have not you lightly eſteemed them? Have not you been ungrateful for them? Have you not obſtinately counteracted the gracious deſign for which they were beſtowed? or ſquandered them away in the purſuit of ſin and vanity. Can we view our wickedneſs in this odious light, and not be 'covered with ſhame and confuſion of 'face;' and not be deeply penetrated with an affecting ſenſe of our moſt undutiful conduct? Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe! for which of his good works do you tranſgreſs againſt him? what iniquity have

have you found in him, that you have gone far from him?

4. You have deſpiſed the awful judgments of God. The wrath of the Almighty is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men, not only by ſolemn denunciations, but by awful inſtances recorded in Scripture. Memorable are the words of the prophet David: 'The Lord ſhall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedneſs.' How ſolemn the prediction delivered by Malachi! 'All that do wickedly, ſhall be ſtubble, and the day that cometh ſhall burn them up, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.' He hath teſtified his juſt diſpleaſure againſt all manner of wickedneſs, by terrible things in righteouſneſs. 'He ſpared not the angels that ſinned, but thruſt them down to hell, and reſerved them in everlaſting chains, under darkneſs, to the judgment of the great day.' Though you have heard in the word of truth, that neither the excellency of their nature, the dignity of their ſtation, nor the multitude who joined in the apoſtacy (having never ſeen any precedent of divine wrath), reſtrained God from inflicting upon them divine vengeance, even for one tranſgreſſion; yet you have committed one iniquity after another, until they are in 'number as the hairs upon your heads.'

How awful the righteous judgment which the Lord God executed upon our firſt parents for their diſobedience! Having tranſgreſſed his law, he expelled them from his preſence, and

and the garden of delights, wherein they were placed, and, in part, inflicted the ſentence of death denounced againſt ſin, in conſequence of which, mankind are born children of wrath, liable to death and deſtruction. Notwithſtanding, you were acquainted with this direful event, and the dreadful conſequences of violating the divine law, inattentive to the inſtructions which it conveys, you have often done verywickedly. —'When God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man 'was great on the earth, and that all fleſh had 'corrupted their way, he brought in the over-'flowing flood upon the world of the ungodly.' When Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities had given themſelves over to wickedneſs, 'the Lord rained upon them fire and 'brimſtone from heaven; turned them into 'aſhes, making them an example unto thoſe 'that after ſhould live ungodly.' When the Iſraelites fell into idolatry, 'the Lord delivered 'them into the hands of their enemies.' When they committed uncleanneſs, 'there fell of 'them in one day, twenty-three thouſand.' When they tempted Chriſt, they 'were de-'ſtroyed of ſerpents,' when they murmured, they 'were conſumed of the deſtroyer;' and after they rejected and crucified the Son of God, 'wrath came upon them to the utter-'moſt;' their city, temple, and nation, were reduced to ruin. What, indeed, are all the direful calamities, which, in every age, have deſolated the earth, overturned cities, kingdoms, and empires? but the righteous judgments of God,

God, who 'turneth fruitful lands into barren-'neſs, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell 'therein.'

Conſider, farther, that the Lord who loveth righteouſneſs, hath not permitted, even thoſe ſins which ſeem to us leſs criminal, to eſcape puniſhment. Uzza, who only touched the ark of God, contrary to the divine command, when the oxen ſtumbled which drew the cart whereon it was placed, for this raſh action, though done perhaps with a good deſign, was ſmitten, and 'died before the Lord.' This alarming diſpenſation, ought to be conſidered ſeriouſly, by thoſe who imagine that upright intention affords ſufficient excuſe for tranſgreſſing any of God's precepts. Above fifty thouſand of the men of Bethſhemiſh were ſmitten by the Lord, who ſeem, merely from curioſity, to have looked into the ark of God. This dreadful calamity inſtructs thoſe who preſumptuouſly intermeddle with ſacred things, of the imminent danger to which they expoſe themſelves. A poor man who 'gathered ſticks 'on the Sabbath day,' perhaps, thinking that they were neceſſary for fuel, was put to death, by an expreſs mandate from heaven. 'All the congregation brought him without 'the camp, and ſtoned him with ſtones, and 'he died, as the Lord commanded Moſes.' Ananias and Sapphira, for diſſimulation and falſehood, were ſuddenly 'ſtruck dead;' and Herod was 'ſmitten by the angel of the 'Lord, becauſe he gave not God the glory.' Now, all theſe things, and many others, happened

'pened unto them for enſamples, and they are 'written for our admonition, notwithſtand-'ing, we have ſinned after the ſimilitude of 'theſe tranſgreſſions.'—I have one thing more to add, which greatly aggravates our wickedneſs, and it is the moſt alarming of any that hath been mentioned. It is this—The Moſt High God hath ſolemnly declared, 'that the 'wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and the na-'tions that forget God.' At the final judgment, 'all that perſiſt in doing wickedly ſhall 'go away into everlaſting puniſhment, prepa-'red for the devil and his angels, where the 'worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench-'ed.' Though you have been often fully informed of this approaching, awful day, wherein the workers of iniquity ſhall have aſſigned them endleſs deſtruction, and miſery for their portion; have not you, regardleſs of warnings and threatenings, gone on in your treſpaſſes? Once more,

5. You have counteracted the bleſſed deſign of the grace of God revealed in the goſpel. From the whole current of Scripture, it is evident, that God ſent his Son Jeſus Chriſt, to bleſs us, in turning every one of us from our iniquities; that his ſufferings and death, were intended to put an end to ſin, and to finiſh tranſgreſſion; 'that he gave 'himſelf for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, 'and to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, 'zealous of good works.' To accompliſh this benevolent purpoſe, the Son of God aſſumed human nature, and the 'form of a ſervant; he took

took on him our infirmities,' he 'endured the 'contradiction of ſinners,' he 'ſubmitted to re-'proach,' he was aſſailed by the powers of darkneſs, he 'was deſpiſed and rejected of 'men,' the 'ſorrows of death compaſſed him 'about,' he 'made his ſoul an offering for ſin,' he 'bare our ſins on his own body on the 'tree, that we, being dead unto ſin, might 'live unto righteouſneſs.' And was the Captain of ſalvation, thus made perfect through ſufferings? and ought not we to acknowledge his grace with the utmoſt gratitude, and to improve it with the warmeſt affection, expreſſed by dutiful returns of fidelity and obedience? What powerful obligations hath Jeſus Chriſt brought us under, to deteſt and avoid all manner of iniquity, by the rich diſplays he hath given of his infinite love and grace, in his ſufferings and death, in his ſubſequent exaltation and glory, and the tender compaſſion he hath uniformly ſhewn to the children of men? What ſtrong encouragements hath he, who is able to ſuccour us when tempted, laid before us, diligently to beware of every ſpecies of tranſgreſſion, and faithfully to perform every part of duty?—Notwithſtanding the aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion of the Lord of glory, his tranſcendant love to us, who were utterly unworthy, and the wonderful demonſtration given in his croſs, of the malignity of ſin; have not you turned his grace into wantonneſs, and done very wickedly? Though he 'became 'obedient even unto death,' and died for us, that

that we might live together with him; have not we, by our ſins, 'crucified him afreſh, put 'him to open ſhame, and done deſpite to the 'Spirit of grace?' Doth not your own hearts condemn you? How much more will God, who is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things? Is not then your wickedneſs great, and highly aggravated by theſe circumſtances which I have mentioned, that ought, this day, to be recollected with contrite hearts, and earneſt prayers for pardoning mercy, and ſanctifying grace?

II. I proceed to conſider the import and evidence of the other article contained in the charge before us. 'Are not thine iniquities 'infinite?' The word rendered *iniquity*, ſignifies perverſity, or frowardneſs, and, by an eaſy tranſition, is uſed to expreſs any ſtubborn deviation from the perfect rule of conduct with which God hath been pleaſed to furniſh us. Such iniquities are infinite, not in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word, in which it is only applicable to God, but according to its frequent acceptation in common diſcourſe, where that is ſaid to be infinite, which exceeds all due bounds, which is above our comprehenſion, and ſurpaſſes all arithmetical calculation. Though Almighty God telleth all our wanderings, yet ſuch is the immenſe multitude of our ſins, that to us, they are gone above all reckoning up. They may, however, be diſtributed into ſeveral claſſes, and ſo arranged under proper denominations, as that we

we may be fully ſatisfied of the juſtice of the information, I mean to explain and illuſtrate. I ſhall comprize what I have to ſay, on this part of the ſubject, under the following particulars—Have you not omitted many duties, which God hath explicitly required?—Have you not done many things, that he hath expreſsly prohibited?—And have not your beſt acts of obedience been attended with many blemiſhes, and deficiencies?—I ſay,

Have you not omitted many duties, that God hath explicitly required? Have you not tranſgreſſed his laws in every period of life; in childhood, youth, and maturer years; in every condition, proſperous and adverſe; in every employment, civil or ſacred; in every ſtation, whether conſpicuous or retired; in every relation, wherein you were placed at all times, and in all places, whether holy or common? Have you not treſpaſſed directly againſt God, injured your neighbour, and wronged your own ſouls? If you have been inoffenſive and righteous before men, have you not been unrighteous before God, with-holding from him that ſupreme affection which is due to him on account of his infinite excellencies and ineſtimable benefits? Though you may have yielded external reſpect to his commandments, have not you often inwardly violated the obligations you were thereby laid under, to reſign yourſelves to his diſpoſal, to truſt in his providence, to reverence his name, and advance his glory? Though you have not profaned

ned his name, or attributes, in your converſation, yet you have not ſanctified him as you ought in your hearts. Though you have refrained from your worldly buſineſs on the ſabbaths of the Lord your God, have not you often encroached on that portion of ſacred time he hath appropriated to himſelf, by unneceſſary amuſements, and trifling diſcourſe? Though attentive to ſome relative duties, congenial to your natural temper, have you inſtructed, admoniſhed, and reproved thoſe intruſted to your care, recommending to them the word of God, and ſetting before them examples of circumſpection and holineſs? How many who are not chargeable with preſumptuous tranſgreſſions againſt the law of God, who yet believe not his everlaſting goſpel, and place not their ſole dependance on Jeſus Chriſt, who are inſenſible of their unſpeakable need of him, and of the Holy Spirit to renew and ſanctify them? How many, who are regular and decent in their external conduct, and punctual in attending on divine ordinances, who are under the influence of pride, preſumption, the love of the world, and other corrupt paſſions; who perſiſt in impenitence and unbelief, and in the neglect of the important exerciſes of true godlineſs? After thus reviewing your conduct, you muſt be ſenſible, that you have neglected to perform many commanded duties. Farther,

Have you not done many things that God hath expreſsly prohibited? According to the teſtimony of God, every imagination of the thoughts

thoughts of 'mans heart is only evil contin-'ually.' Recollect the ſentiments you have often cheriſhed in your hearts, diſhonourable to the majeſty, the providence, the law, and ſalvation of the Moſt High; the injurious thoughts you have entertained reſpecting your neighbour, ariſing from hatred or envy, and thoſe which proved hurtful to your own beſt intereſts.—Call to mind the ſinful words that you have ſpoken on various occaſions. How many profane and impious, proud and inſolent, impure and fooliſh ſpeeches have dropt from your lips? How many falſe and deceitful, raſh and vain cenſorious, ſlanderous things have we uttered in converſation? Hath not corrupt communication often proceeded out of our mouths, which tended not to the uſe of edifying, that could not miniſter grace to the hearers, but proved offenſive to God, and injurious to our brethren? As the wiſe man remarks, 'in the multitude of words there want-'eth not ſin;' in proof of which, a writer of ſome eminence recounts twenty-four ſorts of ſins committed by the tongue. After reviewing our converſation in time paſt, we may juſtly exclaim, in the words of David king of Iſrael, 'who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe 'thou us from our ſecret faults!' That great man, having contemplated the glory of Jehovah diſplayed in the heavens, the work of his hand, and in the law delivered from his mouth, reflecting on his own heart and conduct, diſcovered by the light of the word and Spirit

Spirit of God, an immenſe number of ſins he had not formerly perceived, on which he uſes this forcible exclamation, 'who can under-'ſtand his errors!'—Call to your remembrance, alſo, the ſinful actions whereby you have violated the holy laws of God. With how many acts of intemperance are we chargeable, in immoderately deſiring, and purſuing the pleaſures and enjoyments of this preſent world? How frequently have we committed acts of injuſtice, by not giving to every one his due, and by not 'doing to others as we 'would that they ſhould do to us?' How manifold the inſtances of ungodlineſs whereof we have been guilty, in neglecting to attend and improve the ordinances of divine appointment; in not cheriſhing the graces of the Holy Spirit, and not uniformly maintaining a converſation becoming the goſpel? To all theſe, add the ſins we have contracted in the buſineſſes and ſtations we have occupied, and in all our tranſactions, whether common or ſacred, and then ſay, have not our tranſgreſſions been multiplied before God, and do they not teſtify againſt us?—Once more,

Have not your beſt performances been attended with many blemiſhes and deficiencies? In innumerable inſtances, criminal negligence, hypocriſy and formality, have intermixed with your moſt ſolemn ſervices; vain and worldly thoughts have diſturbed your ſacred worſhip; lamentable imperfections in humility, in reverence and love for God, have blended

themſelves with exerciſes of devotion, and ſpoiled the ſacrifices you have preſented before God. The practice of the duties of juſtice and righteouſneſs, hath often flowed from the fear of reproach, or the love of reputation; and not from an unbiaſſed regard to equity, and a prevailing reſpect to the authority and approbation of God. Acts of beneficence and charity have often proceeded from the deſire of applauſe and reſpect among men, and not from love to God and the Redeemer, and ſolicitude to evidence the ſincerity of our profeſſion of faith in the goſpel. In many things we all offend, and theſe we ought humbly to acknowledge, ſaying with the church, in the prophecies of Iſaiah, 'all our righteouſneſſes are 'as filthy rags.' Not one of our beſt performances are ſo pure and perfect, as to be wholly free from ſin. The effect cannot be more excellent than the cauſe by which it is produced: The beſt of men being only ſanctified in part, their actions cannot be altogether good and holy.—Think ſeriouſly on the various treſpaſſes which you have committed, that might be arranged under the ſeveral claſſes now mentioned, and you may ſee ſufficient reaſon to adopt the words in the fortieth Pſalm, verſe 12. 'Innumerable evils have com-'paſſed me about, mine iniquities have taken 'hold upon me, ſo that I am not able to look 'up; they are more than the hairs of mine 'head, therefore my heart faileth me.'

Thus have I exhibited the magnitude and the

the multitude of your iniquities, in order to awaken your godly ſorrow for ſin—to ſhew the neceſſity of faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and of circumſpection and vigilance in your future conduct.—What you have now heard, ought to be improved for theſe valuable practical purpoſes.

1. This ſubject ought to produce genuine humiliation, and godly ſorrow for ſin. Such is its dreadful malignity, that it is every where repreſented in ſcripture by the moſt deteſtable images, and pointed out as the ſource of all the calamities that afflict the human race. It infeebles, corrupts, and debaſes our nature; it diſturbs the beautiful order which God hath eſtabliſhed; it perverts our powers; it poiſons our comforts; it embitters our croſſes, and expoſes to the wrath of the Almighty. Such is its awful demerit, that it deprives of the favour and image of God, and ſubjects to everlaſting puniſhment from which we can be delivered only through the atoning ſacrifice of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Such is its mighty dangerous influence, that nothing leſs than Omnipotence can ſubdue its power, and reſcue from its uſurped dominion. Deeply impreſſed, then, with a ſenſe of the enormity and number of our tranſgreſſions, let us, with penitential ſorrow, and real contrition of heart, humble ourſelves before God. Fully convinced of the odious nature and terrible conſequences of ſin diſplayed in the croſs of Chriſt, let us take to ourſelves 'ſhame and confuſion

'of face, and repent in duſt and aſhes.' Abhorring ourſelves in every view that we can take, let us have immediate recourſe to the infinite mercy of God in Chriſt revealed in the goſpel, humbly acknowledging our treſpaſſes unto him who alone can forgive ſins. Under heartfelt conviction of our ſin, folly, and danger, and the tender mercies of God our Saviour, let us return unto him from whom we have departed, with 'weeping and ſupplication,' ſaying unto him, 'take away all iniquity, and receive us graciouſly.'

2. This diſcourſe ſerves to ſhew the abſolute neceſſity of 'faith in Jeſus Chriſt.' We cannot properly underſtand, eſteem, or embrace the mercy of God in Chriſt, until we are convinced of our ſin and miſery. To inſenſibility of their depravity and guilt, is to be attributed the negligence and indifference which many diſcover toward the goſpel; whereas, a juſt ſenſe of the atrocity and multitude of our iniquities, leads to acknowledge the neceſſity of being intereſted in the all-ſufficient Redeemer. There is no other way by which we can obtain the remiſſion of ſins, and be reſtored to the favour of God, than through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. In him 'we have 'redemption through his blood, the forgive-'neſs of ſins, according to the riches of his 'grace.' 'Without ſhedding of blood there 'is no remiſſion.' The typical ſacrifices offered under the Old Teſtament, were only ſhadows of the great propitiation of Jeſus Chriſt.

In

In vain do we attempt by reformation of conduct to cancel the guilt that we have contracted. Such presumption would shew our ignorance, both of ourselves and the law of God, as well as of the method of salvation discovered in the gospel. Beware then of seeking that in yourselves which is only to be found in the Saviour; of expecting that from your obedience to the law, which can only be obtained by means of faith in his name. Admiring the infinite grace of God, manifested through the Lord Jesus Christ, betake yourselves to him 'who is mighty to save. Flee for refuge, 'to lay hold on the hope set before us,' deriving encouragement from his own gracious words, 'He that cometh unto me, I will in 'nowise cast out.'

3. This subject ought to excite to circumspection and vigilance. 'Keep your hearts 'with all diligence, for out of them are the 'issues of life and death.' 'Take heed, brethren, 'lest there be in any of you an evil heart of 'unbelief, in departing from the living God.' 'Set a watch before your mouth, and keep 'the door of your lips, lest you offend with 'your tongue.' 'Take heed also to your 'ways, enter not into the path of the wicked, 'and go not in the way of evil men; avoid 'it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass a-'way.' 'Watch and pray, that you enter 'not into temptation *.' In humble dependance on divine grace, guard against all those

* Phil. iv. 7. 1 Pet. i. 5. Psal. iii. 3.

principles and practices, however prevalent, that might prove injurious to your beſt intereſts, and endeavour to ſhine forth 'in the 'beauties of holineſs.' Then may you hope, that the calamities with which you are viſited are not the effects of the wrath of God, but of his infinite love, deſigned to purify you in the furnace of affliction; then may you expect, that he who hath delivered, will deliver and preſerve to his heavenly kingdom.—May the peace of God rule in your hearts—May the power of God be your ſtrength and ſtay—May the providence of God afford you conſtant protection and ſafety—May the bleſſing of God reſt on you and all that you have.—'Thou, O Lord, art a ſhield for us, our glo-'ry, and the lifter up of our heads.'—And to thy name be honour and praiſe. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF EXCUSES TO EXTENUATE PEOPLES FAULTS.

2 CHRON. XXIV. 20.

Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper?

FORMING excuſes for tranſgreſſion is an ancient and frequent practice. It commonly proceeds from ſupine indolence, ſuppoſed incapacity, criminal averſion to duty, the neglect of improving opportunity, and ſimilar pernicious ſources. The truth of this remark is abundantly confirmed by many ſtriking inſtances recorded in ſcripture, as well as by the attentive obſervation of what paſſes in the world. Adam, when called to account by the Lord God for violating the divine command, acknowledged the crime he had committed, but endeavoured to extenuate his ſin by transferring the blame to his companion, The woman, when examined by her Creator as to the fact, denied not the treſpaſs, but tried to palliate the offence by the ſubtilty of the ſerpent by whom ſhe was ſeduced. This diſ-

poſition diſcovered by our firſt parents, ſeems to have been tranſmitted by them to their poſterity, who in all ages have acted under its baneful influence, and ſhewn a ſtrong propenſity to conceal, or diſguiſe their bad actions. After Cain had ſlain his brother, God made inquiſition for blood, and aſked him, 'Where 'is Abel, thy brother?' The murderer, to alleviate his guilt, made this preſumptuous reply, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Aaron, having been challenged by Moſes reſpecting the golden calf, why he brought ſo great a ſin upon the Iſraelites? wiſhing to mitigate the crime, charged the congregation with the treſpaſs, in theſe words: 'Thou knoweſt this peo-'ple, that they are ſet on miſchief.' Saul, the ſon of Kiſh, having received an expreſs commandment from God to deſtroy all the Amalekites with all their poſſeſſions, when accuſed of perverſe diſobedience to the divine authority, he meanly put the fault from himſelf upon the people. David, the king of Iſrael, having perpetrated an enormous crime, which was followed with an order to place Uriah the Hittite in the front of the battle where he was ſlain, fooliſhly attributed this event to accident, ſaying, 'The ſword devour-'eth one as well as another.' The rejection of the offers of the rich grace exhibited in the goſpel, is apologized for by the regard men owe to urgent buſineſs, to their temporal intereſts, and intimate connections. So ſtrong is this propenſity in human nature, that it diſcovers

vers itſelf in ſociety every day; nay, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt declares it will continue to operate even at the final judgment. Hypocrites, however notorious, profane perſons, however wicked, will perſiſt in alledging what they can to juſtify themſelves, and to leſſen the atrocity of their ſins, though without effect.

In order to expoſe the ſin and folly of this fruitleſs expedient, I put the queſtion to you, my brethren, which Zechariah, when bleſſed with the Spirit of God, propoſed to the men of Judah: 'Thus ſaith God, Why tranſgreſs ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot proſper?' Why do you contemn the ſupreme authority of Jehovah, and refuſe obedience to the God who made, and who preſerves you, even after you are aſſured that, by acting in this manner, you wrong your own ſouls, and forfeit your happineſs. 'Produce your cauſe, 'ſaith the Lord; bring forth your ſtrong arguments, ſaith the King of Jacob,' whereby you endeavour to vindicate your conduct, and to diminiſh the enormity of your ſins. 'Come 'now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the 'Lord,' ſpecify the principal defences which you can offer to extenuate your tranſgreſſions; and, in dependence on God, I will ſhew that they are futile and frivolous; that indeed ye are without excuſe, and have no good reaſon for violating the law of the Lord. Do you plead ignorance—inability—cuſtom—example—maxims—circumſtances? I affirm that no one of theſe pleas can juſtify bad con-

duct, and that you are, as the apoſtle of the Gentiles declares, 'without excuſe.' Let us candidly examine them one by one, and impartially enquire into their force and validity, that, convinced of their inſufficiency for the purpoſes to which they are often applied, we may be brought to a ſenſe and acknowledgment of our guilt, and be compelled to flee to Jeſus Chriſt for refuge and ſalvation.

1. Ignorance is urged as an excuſe for tranſgreſſing the commandments of the Lord. Do you alledge, that, in many caſes, you are uncertain what is really ſinful, and that the divine law hath prohibited ſuch and ſuch actions; if then you do wrong, it is becauſe you know not your duty?—Laws are enacted and publiſhed to inform men what they ought to do, and what they ought to avoid. For this purpoſe, among others, the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth hath promulgated his perfect law, in which he hath ſhewn what is good, and what he requireth of us. This royal law we ought to ſtudy with diligence, and to obſerve with our whole hearts, even to the end of life. Intimate acquaintance with it is indiſpenſibly requiſite to the right knowledge of ſin, if we can rely on the teſtimony of the apoſtle of the Gentiles, who affirms, 'that he 'had not known ſin, but by the law.' Indeed, we cannot have a juſt ſenſe, either of ſin or duty, unleſs we ſtudy thoſe holy precepts which are given to be a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our goings. To this laudable

ble practice we have the ſtrongeſt encouragement; it is tranſlated into our own language; in itſelf it is plain and intelligible; and, like every thing elſe, it is eaſy to him that underſtandeth.

In ſome inſtances, ignorance, doubtleſs, is excuſable. If the matter is of little importance for us to be acquainted with, as of the immenſe magnitude of the ſun in the firmament: or, if the object is but obſcurely revealed, and of no great conſequence for us exactly to aſcertain, as of the perſon of Melchiſedec, the prieſt of the Moſt High God. Thoſe things, however, which relate to our duty and happineſs, that are clearly revealed, we ought to ſtudy with the utmoſt attention and ſolicitude, and to treat with profound reſpect and ſubmiſſion. Voluntary ignorance of ſuch matters, far from diminiſhing peoples faults, proves a great aggravation of them. Why are not you well informed reſpecting every part of your duty, which is plainly ſet before you in the word of God; wherein is made known the good and acceptable will of our Maſter in heaven? He hath not only ſpoken, but written to you the great things of his law, and ſent unto you his ſervants, whoſe lips ſhould ſpeak knowledge, to inſtruct you in the way of ſalvation. He hath not withheld any thing neceſſary to give you full information of your duty, and to regulate your conduct in every condition. With what a bad grace, then, do you plead ignorance to

extenuate your tranſgreſſions. Would an earthly judge ſuſtain this plea as a ſufficient defence for treſpaſſes againſt thoſe laws which had been regularly publiſhed throughout the realm? Notwithſtanding the ſtatute was promulgated with great ſolemnity, do you think you would be acquitted of the crime you had committed, becauſe you did not know that what you had done was a violation of the law? Would not you be told, that if you did not know, you might; you ought to have known the laws which contain full information reſpecting every part of your conduct? And will not the Supreme Judge of all the earth reject ſuch a frivolous pretext, as unworthy of notice? Hear with attention his own words: 'If thou ſayeſt, Behold we knew it not: doth 'not he that pondereth the heart conſider it, 'and he that keepeth thy ſoul, doth not he 'know it; and ſhall not he render to every 'man according to his works?'

Convinced that excuſes derived from this ſource are unavailing, and cannot anſwer the purpoſes for which they are produced, beware of that dangerous ignorance which ſtifles remorſe, and is the fruitful parent of ſecurity, preſumption, and many other evils. Why did the rebellious Iſraelites provoke God in the wilderneſs for forty years, but becauſe they did not know his ways? Why did the rulers and the people of the Jews deny the Holy and the Juſt One, and kill the Prince of Life, but becauſe they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophets,

Prophets, which are read every Sabbath day? Why did Saul of Tarſus blaſpheme, perſecute, and injure the Church of Jeſus Chriſt, but becauſe he acted ignorantly in unbelief? Senſible that indulgence in any ſin will effectually exclude from the kingdom of heaven, endeavour to be well acquaint, not only with the weightier matters of the law, but with thoſe duties which ſeem to eſcape the notice of not a few, ſuch as ſelf-denial, moderation, reſtitution, with others I ſtay not to mention. Plead not unneceſſarily ignorance as a cloke for ſin; diligently improve the advantages you enjoy for the acquiſition of knowledge, in humble dependence on the Father of lights, that he may cauſe you to underſtand the way of his precepts.

2. Inability is pleaded to extenuate the tranſgreſſion of the commandments of God. People ſay that they have not power to do what is required of them, and ſo they think it unneceſſary to eſſay what they deem impracticable.—*Inability* is a relative term, applied to expreſs the inſufficiency of thoſe exertions which are inadequate to the accompliſhment of the purpoſes intended to be effected. Did it ariſe from want of natural capacity, or from external obſtacles which could not be removed, this excuſe might be ſuſtained as valid and ſatisfactory. But this kind of imbecility you cannot urge, with propriety, as the reaſon of your diſobedience to the authority of God. You muſt acknowledge that you poſſeſs

poſſeſs underſtandings capable of diſcerning truth, excellence, and duty, that they may be enriched with the knowledge of the good and perfect will of God, and the important intereſting objects propoſed to your conſideration. You cannot refuſe that you have the power of volition, that you may chooſe the good, and refuſe the evil. Though your underſtandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them, you may have them enlightened by the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation; though your wills are obſtinate and perverſe, they may be inclined to that which is well pleaſing in God's ſight. Your averſion to duty cannot be ſuſtained as a relevant excuſe for neglecting it; on the contrary, your diſinclination to that which is good greatly increaſes the criminality of bad conduct; far from extenuating, it highly aggravates the offence; the more vicious, the ſtronger is the propenſity to vice, and, conſequently, greater is the inability to do good. The want of power to diſcharge your duty, whereof you complain, does not remove the guilt of tranſgreſſion, nor diminiſh the neceſſity of your ſubjection to God; it does not render any precept of the Moſt High an improper object of command, nor does it afford a valid excuſe for tranſgreſſing the ſupreme authority of Jehovah. The obedience which we owe to our Creator and Lord, chiefly conſiſts in voluntary ſubjection to his holy law; diſobedience lies in refuſing to yield this dutiful ſubmiſſion;

ſo

ſo that ſtrong inclination to perform what is required, is the immediate ſubject of the command; whereas, the want of this diſpoſition is the direct violation of the divine precept, and conſequently cannot vindicate itſelf.

You do not conduct your worldly buſineſs on this principle. Though you that are huſbandmen cannot unite to the earth one grain of corn that you ſow in your fields, nor contribute to the actual proceſs of vegitation, which are the peculiar effects of divine power, you decline not to cultivate and ſow your grounds. You would be deemed fooliſh, or negligent, were you to plead inability as an excuſe for neglecting any part of your agricultural affairs: how abſurd then to urge this plea for omitting the important duties required in the word of God? Are you not as able, in the exerciſe of the rational powers with which God hath been pleaſed to furniſh you, to attend on the means of ſpiritual improvement, as to perform any ſocial duty incumbent upon you? Are not you as capable of ſearching the ſcriptures, and applying your minds to the intereſting ſubjects they contain, as to any worldly buſineſs in which you are employed? May not you as importunately aſk from God the bleſſings that you need, as you beg a favour from a friend? Cannot you as eaſily aſſociate with good, as with bad company; and avoid occaſions of committing ſin, as embrace opportunities of indulging in vice?—and may not you as well conſider your latter end, and the

the things that belong to your peace, as be anxiouſly engaged in thinking 'what you ſhall eat, 'what you ſhall drink, and wherewithal you 'ſhall be clothed?' What hinders you from being modeſt and humble, kind and beneficent to your brethren? The bulk of people know very well, whatever they pretend, that in theſe and ſimilar inſtances they do not what they are able, and come far ſhort of what many have actually done. Permit me to remind you of the words of God addreſſed to his people of old: 'Remember that you 'are men, and turn unto him from your evil 'ways.' Though you cannot ſubdue your corrupt diſpoſitions, and renovate your natures, yet the grace of God is promiſed in the goſpel, and offered to your acceptance for this very purpoſe. You have more power to abſtain from outward acts of ſin, than you commonly exert; and were you as diligent in endeavouring to be conformed to the will of God, as you are in proſecuting your worldly buſineſs, you might find ſtrength perfected in weakneſs, and much greater ſucceſs than you imagine. Weakneſs and inſufficiency for the duties of obedience, far from forming a proper excuſe for tranſgreſſion, ought to excite that humbling ſenſe of our depravity, which is the firſt ſtep toward recovery to holineſs and happineſs.

3. Cuſtom is adduced to palliate violations of the divine law. Some people ſay, that they conform to cuſtom, and think it proper, and

and lawful to do ſo. They alledge, that certain practices hath become ſo familiar to them, that they cannot leave them off; that, in ſome inſtances, habit hath added ſtrength to the corruption of nature, and confirmed their various propenſities. If cuſtom and faſhion, ſay they, does not juſtify, at leaſt it diminiſhes the criminality of our conduct.—This defence is the dernier reſort of not a few, who, though they acknowledge they do that which is wrong, yet, when cenſured, they reply, This is the way of the world; this is the faſhion now-a-days; it will not avail to ſtrive againſt the torrent: Why not adopt the practices of thoſe among whom we live? if we do not conform to them, we ſhall be conſidered as whimſical ſingular perſons, who, through pride and vanity, oppoſe eſtabliſhed general cuſtoms.—In this manner ſome are corrupted, and others intimidated, whilſt moſt people dread being ſtigmatized on account of any peculiarity. Singularity, in itſelf, my friends, is neither laudable nor criminal. To be eminently good and pious, holy and righteous, beneficent and merciful, is man's greateſt excellence, and trueſt glory; to be diſtinguiſhed beyond others for reſemblance to Jeſus Chriſt, and abundance of the fruits of righteouſneſs, is truly deſirable and praiſe-worthy. To be remarkably wicked and profligate, renders a man odious and contemptible, however numerous they be who are of this deſcription.

To give check to the inſinuating influence of prevailing

prevailing bad cuſtoms, abſtain from thoſe ſocieties and employments which might be attended with pernicious effects; engage in thoſe buſineſſes, and aſſociate with thoſe companions which are adverſe to the ill habits you may have contracted. Let the becoming reſpect which you diſcover for the ſentiments and judgments of mankind be conſiſtent with a ſacred regard to duty, and take heed that you be not ſeduced by baſe timidity from that line of conduct which the word of God and your own conſcience point out to you. Though you cannot altogether ceaſe from ſin, and turn from the error of your ways, you can, unqueſtionably, refrain from thoſe hurtful practices whereby people are confirmed in vice. Frequent repetition of tranſgreſſion tends to harden the heart, to remove the fear of God, and to ſtrengthen corrupt inclinations. The longer you are accuſtomed to any ſin, you will deſiſt from it with the greater reluctance. After having been expreſsly prohibited to 'follow a multitude to do evil,' and warmly exhorted 'to break off your ſins by repent-'ance;' if you perſiſt in diſcovering a ſtronger attachment to cuſtom than to the divine authority, you ſhall indeed be moſt inexcuſable. Why will you be ſo fooliſh as indulge in thoſe pernicious habits which you ought with prudence and fortitude vigorouſly to oppoſe? Though you may endeavour in vain, at once to aboliſh eſtabliſhed uſages, and to counteract their influence, yet, if inſtead of pleading their

their frequency with a view to extenuate them, you exerted yourſelves gradually to correct them, your efforts might, in proceſs of time, be crowned with ſucceſs.

Nothing can be more frivolous and abſurd than to derive excuſes from cuſtom for bad conduct. Suppoſe any of you had contracted a bad habit of drinking to exceſs, or of defrauding your neighbours, do you imagine that your having been much accuſtomed to theſe odious practices which are lamentably prevalent, could be ſuſtained as a relevant defence of theſe crimes? The oftener any tranſgreſſion is committed, the more enormous becomes the guilt contracted, and the more dangerous the condition of the ſinner. Sin, when obſtinately perſiſted in, notwithſtanding the clemency and forbearance of God, his gracious admonitions and awful declarations, far from being leſs heinous, becomes much more atrocious. Beware, then, of endeavouring to exculpate your faults, by having recourſe to ſuch pitiful ſhifts as this of habit, which does not leſſen the criminality of bad actions, but highly aggravates them. 'Ceaſe to do evil, 'and learn to do well; be not conformed to 'this world, but be ye transformed by the re-'newing of your mind, that ye may prove 'what is the good and acceptable will of 'God.'

4. Example is mentioned as another excuſe for tranſgreſſion. There are not a few who plead, in order to extenuate their faults, that they

they imitate the conduct of those of whom they read in sacred and profane history, and of those among whom they reside. They feel the force of example, and are strongly inclined to act under its influence, whilst they are pleased with the thoughts, that, though they are not innocent, common practice renders them at least excusable. They act as others have done, and as many continue to do whom they pretend not to excel.—The principle of imitation is so strong, that some have thought it the chief cause of the corruption which prevails in the world; and that they cannot better explain how it is propagated among mankind, than by attributing it to this fruitful source of iniquity. Though this be not the primary or only spring from whence arises the depravity of the human race, yet it must be acknowledged a principal source, to which we are not surprised some people resort, that they may be supplied with plausible pretexts for improper conduct. The contagion of bad example ought to be guarded against, with the utmost solicitude; and Christians ought to be fortified against the temptation it presents, by the sublime doctrines and promised grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That you may be convinced of the weakness and folly of the flimsy defence derived from this quarter, you ought to recollect whose example you plead to extenuate your faults. Is it the common practice of those among whom you live, by which you are influenced? If you walk after the example

ample of the world, if you are carried down by the current of fashion, as dead fishes glide along with the stream, you may expect to be condemned with the world. If you follow the multitude in direct violation of the divine command, and walk with them in the 'broad 'way that leadeth to destruction;' lay your account to share in their punishment, and to inherit the just reward of your deeds.

Perhaps the persons whom you copy after are respectable members of society, of whom in charity you are obliged to entertain a good opinion. You may be sensible that it is very difficult to determine who are really good people to whom this character justly belongs. In the exercise of that 'charity which hopeth all 'things,' we ought to cherish favourable sentiments respecting those whose conduct accords with their profession; but this instance of benevolence does not constitute them Christians whom you ought to imitate. The most eminent saints of whom we read in scripture, occasionally discovered some lamentable infirmities, and committed sins, which we ought carefully to avoid. You cannot be so absurd as to imagine, that their faults are mentioned that you might copy them: 'They are writ-'ten for our admonition, upon whom the ends 'of the world are come; that he that think-'eth he standeth, may take heed lest he fall.' The intemperance of Noah, the dissimulation of Jacob, the enormous transgression of David, the pride of Hezekiah, the denial of

Jesus

Jeſus Chriſt by the Apoſtle Peter, are not recorded for our imitation, but are exhibited as beacons to warn us of thoſe dangers whereby they ſuffered. Will you then offend God becauſe you have heard that others have tranſgreſſed againſt him? Would you reſemble the faithful ſervants of the Moſt High, in thoſe amiable graces and virtues whereby they adorned the ſeveral ſtations which they occupied? diligently follow thoſe illuſtrious examples, on account of which they are celebrated in the ſcriptures: Let princes act like Joſiah king of Judah; officers at court, like the treaſurer of Ethiopia; governors, like Moſes the man of God; let ſoldiers imitate Cornelius the centurion; mechanics, Paul the tentmaker; the proſperous, good Jehoſhaphat; the afflicted, upright Job. Endeavour to derive benefit from the follies and ſins of other men, but never ſet them before you as patterns, nor try to palliate your tranſgreſſions by their crimes, which would be to pervert them to the worſt of purpoſes. It might be improper at preſent to extend my remarks farther on this ſubject; I conclude the article with the words of Jeſus Chriſt addreſſed to his diſciples: 'I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but 'ye cannot bear them now.'

5. Falſe maxims are urged as excuſes to extenuate tranſgreſſions of the divine law. Many of theſe are current in the world, by which people endeavour to ſcreen their bad actions. Such are the following: 'Better be out of the 'world,

'world, than out of the fashion.' This axiom hath often been adduced to vindicate, if possible, the dissolute manners of professing Christians. Far from being founded on truth and justice, it holds forth, under a specious appearance, a dangerous principle.—'Better we 'had never been in the world that lieth in 'wickedness, than to have adopted the de- 'praved customs of those who have their por- 'tion in this life.' Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even our Father; and shall we counteract the gracious designs which the Son of God had in view, to accomplish by his death. Christians, are actuated not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God. By being baptized, they have renounced subjection to the corrupt influence of the world, and in the word of God they are expresly required not to be conformed to it in principles, practices, and aims. It therefore behoves us, not to approve, but to reject with disdain, the foolish maxim I repeated, and to demonstrate by our temper, behaviour, and views, that, being born from above, we are not of this world, nor governed by those dangerous principles which are commonly received among mankind.

Another adage, which is often mentioned to excuse remissness in duty, is, 'God ac- 'cepts the will for the deed.' This sentiment seems to receive support from the well known saying of the Apostle Paul, designed to encourage

courage people of a benevolent diſpoſition, who are deſtitute of ability and opportunity to relieve the needy. Perſons in theſe circumſtances, God is pleaſed mercifully to regard, and declares that he will abundantly recompenſe their readineſs to perform good works. 'If there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted 'according to what a man hath, and not ac-'cording to what he hath not.' What concluſion do you infer from this generous aſſurance? Do you ſay that you have a willing mind to pray, to read and hear the word of God, to love your neighbours, and to do to them as you would that they ſhould do to you? Be not deceived; do not imagine you are poſſeſſed of this willing mind to which you lay claim, if it is not demonſtrated by ſuitable practice, and correſponding prompt performance of every part of duty.—Say not, Our hearts are good, though our lives are faulty, and in ſome inſtances blame-worthy. Suppoſe not that you are authorized to ſpeak in this manner by theſe words of the Apoſtle Paul, in the 7th chapter of the Romans: 'That I would, I do not; and the evil that 'I would not, that I do.' The life is often better, but never worſe than the heart. All pretences to good hearts are vain and deluſive, which are not ſupported by good conduct. The ſtreams are always of the ſame nature with the fountain from whence they proceed. The beſt of a Chriſtian, and the worſt of a wicked man, is the heart. The words of Solomon

lomon have been often uſed to extenuate criminal negligence in the ſervice of God. 'Be not 'righteous over much.' Some people ſeem to think that it is an eaſy matter to get to heaven, and therefore unneceſſary for us to be much employed about our ſpiritual and eternal intereſts; whilſt others, who profeſs to be Chriſtians, are offended, when charged with indolence and indifference reſpecting their beſt concerns, and ſay you carry things too far; be content with the religion of your fathers; live like your neighbours. Stop in time, or you will ruin your character. What! ſhall we not be accepted of God, if we regularly attend on divine worſhip, do all the good we can, and give to every one his own?—Thoſe who talk in this manner, ſhew that they do not aright underſtand the advice of the wiſe man, which they plead to vindicate their conduct. The divine law explicitly requires, that we 'love 'the Lord our God with all our ſoul, heart, and 'ſtrength; and that we love our neighbours as 'ourſelves.' We cannot then exceed in love to God, who is ſupremely excellent and amiable; nor need we fear that we love our neighbours more than we ought. By the moſt exact obedience to the perfect law of liberty, we only do what is commanded, and conſequently are not righteous over much. View this Scripture in connection with what follows, and you may be aſſiſted in aſcertaining its true import. The text runs thus: 'Be not righteous over-'much, neither make thyſelf over wiſe. Why

'ſhouldeſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?' The righteouſneſs here intended, is that in which a perſon may exceed, and to which, if he truſt, he deſtroys himſelf. This cannot be the righteouſneſs required in the law of God, to which life is promiſed; nor the righteouſneſs revealed in the goſpel, by receiving which, we obtain pardon of ſin, and eternal life. Though we cannot actually be over righteous, or do more than the royal law demands, yet we may overrate our righteouſneſs, and eſteem it more highly than we ought; and this, I apprehend, is to make ourſelves righteous overmuch. In like manner, though we cannot be too wiſe, yet we may think and ſpeak of our wiſdom more highly than we ought to think; and this is to make ourſelves over wiſe. Theſe dangerous extremes we are cautioned againſt, leſt, through pride and ſelf-conceit, we deſtroy ourſelves. According to this fair interpretation of the words, we may perceive how groſsly they are miſapplied, when preſſed into the ſervice of vindicating negligence in religious practice.

6. Circumſtances are alſo pleaded as excuſes to extenuate the tranſgreſſions men commit. The particular ſituation, you ſay, wherein you are placed, expoſes to many ſtrong temptations, by which you are enſnared; though it does not altogether juſtify, you ſuppoſe it greatly leſſens your guilt. Buſineſs, company, with a variety of avocations, require you to go abroad, to enter into ſociety, and to do many things which cannot well be avoided, theſe prevent

prevent you from reſting on the Sabbath, remembering and ſanctifying it according to the commandment. Do you really imagine that ſuch frivolous pretexts will be ſuſtained as ſufficient apologies for not calling the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable,—and for having done your pleaſure on God's holy day, which he hath conſecrated by his example, bleſſing, and authority. Let not your good be evil ſpoken of; refrain even from things lawful on the Lord's day, that you may not give offence, or tempt the weak to diſſolute practices.—You abſent from the public worſhip of God, which he hath commanded you not to forſake, and to which he hath annexed the promiſe of his preſence and bleſſing. For this you plead the fatigue you ſuſtained from the buſineſs of the preceding week, the inclemency of the weather, the weakneſs of the miniſter, or ſome particular inconvenience. Will ſuch pitiful ſhifts be acknowledged as a relevant defence of criminal omiſſions of this ſort? which ſet light by the authority and bleſſing of the great Lord of all, who hath ſaid, 'Ye ſhall 'reverence my ſanctuary. Thoſe who honour 'me, I will honour; thoſe that deſpiſe me, 'ſhall be lightly eſteemed.'—On ſome occaſions you are provoked, when agitated by paſſion, or through inadvertence, to utter oaths and imprecations; and for this atrocious crime, you apologize, by ſaying, that ſwearing does harm to nobody, and that you did not mean any thing bad. Does not ſwearing diſhonour God?

does it not trample on his authority, and incur his awful displeasure? who hath solemnly declared, that he 'will not hold him guiltless, 'that taketh his name in vain.' Does it not highly injure your own best eternal interests? Does it not ruin your own souls, by exposing you to divine vengeance? And hath it not a most pernicious influence on those who are witnesses of your detestable profanity and blasphemy?—Poverty, and the want of those things which you observe men in affluence possessing in abundance, prompt you fraudulently to lay hold on some article that you need, and which you apprehend they may easily spare. This species of dishonesty relieves your necessities, whilst it does not much hurt them. What, though you may artfully and secretly deprive your neighbour of his property, you cannot conceal one act of dishonesty from God, the terrible avenger of wrong, who hath said, that 'the 'curse shall enter the house of the thief, and 'shall consume it.' Remember, that what is unjustly acquired, shall cost you very dear; if you truly repent, it will prove the source of bitter remorse, of shame and distressing vexation, and demand from you ample restitution; if you die in your sins, it will greatly aggravate your everlasting condemnation. Though you may endeavour to palliate this and other crimes, by plausible excuses, yet remember, however specious they may seem, they cannot ward off merited destruction. Had Achan foreseen the punishment of his covetousness that he suffered,

—had

—had Gehazi been appriſed of the leproſy which ſeized upon him, on account of his avarice,—had Judas conſidered the place to which he is now conſigned, as the conſequence of his eager deſire of money,—had Ananias and Sapphira been warned of that ſudden death which befel them, for deceit and falſehood, perhaps they would have refrained from their covetous practices. And will any of you, after ſuch repeated admonitions, perſiſt in the evil ways wherein they periſhed, and delude yourſelves by unavailing excuſes? Had time permitted, I might have ſhewn you that apologies for tranſgreſſing the commandments of the Lord, derived from conſtitution, from age, from buſineſs, from proſperity or adverſity, from ſociety or ſolitude, and the prevalence of iniquity, are frivolous and vain; that, inſtead of extenuating, they greatly aggravate the faults they are produced to mitigate and diſguiſe. What hath been ſaid may ſuffice at preſent, to point out the folly and the ſin of the pernicious cuſtom of endeavouring to leſſen the criminality of thoſe tranſgreſſions which we ought with humility to acknowledge, and, in dependence upon God, carefully to avoid.

From the whole view we have taken of this ſubject, this important inſtruction ariſes, that the excuſes commonly offered to extenuate the commiſſion of ſin, though exceedingly various, are really criminal. Thoſe very circumſtances, which ought to make us ſtand in awe, and not ſin, are perverted to the odious purpoſe of con-

cealing its turpitude, and leſſening its atrocity. Whatever form they aſſume, however plauſible they appear, if ſtript of every diſguiſe, and properly examined, you may ſee that they are truly contemptible, and take their riſe from infidelity and other corrupt principles. Such is our natural attachment to ſome vices at leaſt, that we are averſe to confeſs their criminality, and to abandon them; and we will rather have recourſe to the moſt pitiful ſhifts, the moſt deluſive artifices, and falſe reaſonings, to juſtify our actions. This affecting truth hath been illuſtrated at conſiderable length in the preceding part of this diſcourſe, 'that every mouth may 'be ſtopped, and every individual convinced 'that he is guilty before God.' The deſign of what hath been ſaid, is to bring you to a ſenſe and acknowledgment of your ſins, that you may be compelled to have recourſe to Jeſus Chriſt for relief, and to claim the benefit of that indemnity he hath procured by his blood, and freely offers to all who, renouncing their own righteouſneſs, 'flee to him, as their only hope 'and city of refuge.' What fooliſh ſelf-deſtroying creatures muſt theſe be, who, in deſpite of the cleareſt evidence, and in flat contradiction to the only method of deliverance, will preſumptuouſly ſtand forth in their own defence! Hearken to the awful words of God, by the prophet Jeremiah: 'Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am 'innocent, ſurely his anger ſhall turn from me. 'Behold, I will plead with thee, becauſe thou 'ſayeſt, I have not ſinned; the Lord hath re-

'jected

'jected thy confidences, and thou ſhalt not 'proſper in them.' Humbly acknowledge, then, your unworthineſs and guilt, and earneſtly requeſt that God, by the power of his Spirit, may make you thoroughly ſenſible of your real condition; that finding yourſelves wretched and miſerable, poor and blind, and naked, with reſpect to your ſpiritual ſtate, you may repair, without delay, to the all-ſufficient Saviour, whoſe blood cleanſeth from all ſin. To God, through Jeſus Chriſt, be glory and honour. *Amen.*

SERMON IV.

THE EQUITY OF GOD'S DISPENSATIONS, AND THE GREATNESS OF HIS MERCY.

EZEKIEL XXXiii. 11.

Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.

FROM theſe words addreſſed by the prophet Ezekiel to the Iſraelites, in vindication of the divine conduct with which they were diſſatisfied, I ſhall take occaſion to reply to ſome objections that have been urged againſt the equity of God's providential diſpenſations; and then —to eſtabliſh the truth of the propoſition, of which the moſt ſolemn aſſurance is here given, 'I have no pleaſure, ſaith the Lord God, in 'the death of the wicked, but that the wicked 'turn from his evil way and live.'

I. I ſhall reply to ſome objections that have been, and are ſtill urged, againſt the equity of God's providential diſpenſations.

'The fooliſhneſs of man perverteth his way, 'and his heart fretteth againſt the Lord.' We

are

are prone to charge God foolishly, as if blame might be attached to him, who doeth all things well, on account of the apparent unequal distributions of his Providence, and the seeming partiality of his government. When we experience the awful effects of his displeasure, we are apt to find fault with his administration, and under the pressure of adversity, to imagine that he deals hardly with us. This odious conduct was remarkably exemplified by the house of Israel, among whom this proverb was frequently used, both in Zion and at Babylon. 'The fathers have eaten the sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' They loudly and repeatedly complained that they suffered the calamities which befel them, on account of the sins of their progenitors, which they thought produced those bitter fruits whereof they and their posterity felt the distressing effects. They boldly affirmed, that the distribution of good and evil was not managed with unbiassed rectitude, and that the procedure of the Most High was not fair and equitable. They presumed to say, The way of the Lord is not equal. To wipe off this foul aspersion, and to shew the perfect righteousness of the divine dispensations, the Almighty was graciously pleased, that he might silence their groundless cavils, to give commission to his servant Ezekiel to assert the consummate rectitude of his providence,—that his ways were equal, and that their ways were unequal. Hence we find him from time to time, in the execution of this trust, employed in resolving the

objections, and removing the difficulties which the houſe of Iſrael ſtarted againſt the wiſdom and juſtice of the divine adminiſtration.

In the verſe immediately preceding my text, the prophet charges them with having ſaid, 'If 'our tranſgreſſions and ſins be upon us, and we 'pine away in them, how ſhould we then 'live?' He then proceeds to give a ſatisfying reply to this enquiry, in the words I have read as the ſubject of diſcourſe. This unbecoming conduct toward God, who loveth righteouſneſs, for which the children of Iſrael were notorious, hath not been unfrequent in every age, and I ſuſpect ſtill exiſts in the days wherein we live. It muſt be acknowledged, that to our imperfect limited view, the ways of Providence toward larger and leſſer ſocieties, as well as individuals, frequently appear to be involved in great obſcurity. Many inſtances of this ſort readily occur to the attentive mind. The deſtruction of all the inhabitants of this earth by a deluge of water, with only a few exceptions. Divine revelation, in great meaſure, confined to the land of Judea, while the nations of the earth ſat in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death. Many thouſands of people ſlain for the ſingle act of looking into the ark of God. The rejection of Saul from the throne and kingdom of Iſrael, whilſt David and Solomon in after-times, though guilty perhaps of as enormous ſins as the ſon of Kiſh, retained the government of that kingdom. That cruel tyrants have been permitted to perſecute the church of God, and

and to put to torture and death vaſt numbers of his dear ſaints. That multitudes of infants and innocent people have periſhed amidſt public calamities. That John the Baptiſt's head ſhould have been cut off, whilſt Barabbas, and many who like him were robbers, have been ſpared and paſſed unpuniſhed. That according to the conſtitution of things which God hath eſtabliſhed, 'The race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, nor riches to men of underſtanding, nor favour to men of ſkill, that one event happeneth to the wiſe and to the fooliſh.' Theſe and ſimilar ſurpriſing incidents, theſe and the like peculiar maxims, agreeable to which the government of the Almighty is managed, give occaſion to thoughtleſs people of ſuperficial diſcernment, to ſuppoſe, that the world is not governed according to the laws of conſummate righteouſneſs, and have induced ſome of them to call in queſtion this fundamental truth, of which we have the ſtrongeſt aſſurance, and from which we can never depart, 'that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.'

Men of this deſcription ſometimes expreſs their diſſatisfaction with the puniſhments which God inflicts on children who ſuffer for the ſins of their parents; and affirm, that this meaſure is rigorous and ſevere, notwithſtanding the procedure is ſanctioned by the common ſenſe of mankind, is approved and imitated by princes of the greateſt celebrity. ——Sometimes they find fault with the diſtinguiſhing mercy which the Lord God, as

the Sovereign Ruler of the univerſe, is pleaſed to diſpenſe to the guilty, though he hath plainly declared, that he hath no reſpect of perſons on account of their accompliſhments or circumſtances. In this manner they deny to the great Lord of all, the prerogative of the monarch, with reſpect to his rebellious ſubjects, the power of the potter over the clay.—Sometimes the unequal diſtribution of worldly good things is cavilled at, and urged as a proof of partiality in the donor. Few only poſſeſs great mental abilities, perſonal vigour, extenſive property, and elevation to grandeur; whilſt many are depreſſed with poverty, languiſh through weakneſs and want, expoſed to neglect and contempt. Little do men of this captious diſpoſition conſider, that theſe enjoyments are uncertain and periſhing, attended with vexation of ſpirit; that they profit not in the day of wrath, and are unworthy to be compared to the more excellent benefits which God confers upon thoſe who are good in his ſight.—Sometimes they complain of diſtreſſing diſappointments which have fruſtrated the beſt deſigns, and defeated the moſt ſanguine expectations, after the moſt proper means have been employed to attain the deſired objects. Such events, which do not unfrequently happen, clearly evince that without the concurrence of God's providence and bleſſing, all human efforts ſhall prove ineffectual to accompliſh their end; whilſt they ſerve to correct men for the unwarrantable confidence which they place in means and inſtruments, they alſo ſhew that

that God can eaſily compenſate the ſufferer for any loſs he ſuſtains.—Sometimes they murmur at thoſe retributions which ſeem diſproportioned to the ſervices performed, as did the labourers, repreſented in the parable, who accuſed their Lord of partiality in giving them their hire. Notwithſtanding they received according to the terms of their agreement, and got all that in reaſon or juſtice they could claim; and though their Lord had right to do with his own as he pleaſed, they complain theſe laſt have wrought but one hour, and thou haſt made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. There have not been wanting ſome, who on theſe and other accounts have fooliſhly carped at the ways of God, impiouſly alleging, that they are not equal, of which the chapter from whence I have taken my text, mentions a ſtriking inſtance. They cenſure them as grievous and burdenſome, tho' in reality they are pleaſant and delightful; they repreſent them as dangerous, though in fact, thoſe who walk in them dwell ſafely, and are quiet from fear of evil; they ſay that they are vain and unprofitable, whereas in keeping them there is a great reward. By ſuch injurious aſperſions have men of corrupt minds calumniated the procedure of Providence. To reſolve theſe and all the other difficulties that are urged upon the ſubject, I plead the righteouſneſs, the ſovereignty, and mercy of Jehovah.

My firſt defence is derived from the righteouſneſs of the Lord. To ſuch complainers as I have now deſcribed

deſcribed, I reply in the words of Elihu, when juſtifying the proceedings of the Moſt High, with reſpect to mankind. 'For he will not lay 'upon man more than right that he ſhould en-'ter into judgment with God.' He will not injure man by inflicting upon him more ſevere puniſhment than he juſtly deſerves, nor by refuſing to confer thoſe ample rewards that he hath graciouſly promiſed. 'The work of a man ſhall 'he render unto him, and cauſe every one to 'find according to his way. Yea, ſurely, God 'will not do wickedly, neither will the Almigh-'ty pervert judgment.' He hath not the leaſt improper regard to any perſon; he reſpects not the frowns of the great; he envies not the condition of the proſperous, nor is he in any caſe influenced by the proſpect of advantage. Suppoſing that God hath made you ſometimes to ſuffer hard things, 'and to drink the wine of 'aſtoniſhment,' yet hath he always dealt with you much better than your iniquities deſerve. To you God condeſcends to addreſs himſelf as he did his people of old by the prophet Micah, 'What have I done unto you? wherein have I 'wearied you? teſtify againſt me.' Contemplate my whole conduct toward the world in general; narrowly ſcrutinize every part of it which relates to yourſelves, and you will find it exactly correſpond with the rules of ſtricteſt juſtice, with my infinite clemency, and my unchangeable veracity pledged in my promiſes, you will be ſenſible that it is perfectly compatible with the ſovereign rights to which I have

an

an undeniable claim. Did you ever perceive injuſtice in any of my commands, rigor or cruelty in any of my inſtitutions, perfidy, or the leaſt failure in any of my engagements? 'Anſwer me, teſtify againſt me, ſaith the 'Lord.' You are allowed to bring evidence, if you can, of any one iniquitous act that God hath ever done. And, if without good reaſon you go far from him, and unjuſtly bring againſt him the charge, that his ways are not equal, you are guilty of abominable ingratitude, egregious folly, and horrid injuſtice. No, no, my brethren, you cannot teſtify againſt God. He is the rock, and his work is perfect, and in him there is no unrighteouſneſs; all his ways are judgment, conſonant to the moſt perfect righteouſneſs. The Lord doeth alway that which is right; nay, ſuch is the conſummate perfection of his nature, that he cannot do iniquity. Since then righteouſneſs belongeth unto the Lord, he is unqueſtionably juſt, and equitable in all his diſpenſations.

The ſovereignty of Jehovah, the Moſt High, over all the earth, ſuggeſts another reply to the objections that are adduced againſt the rectitude of his diſpenſations. The ſupreme Lord of all, who doeth according to his pleaſure in heaven and on earth, beſtows his favours on whom he will, and in ſuch meaſures as ſeemeth good in his ſight. He hath given the earth to the children of men, but he hath diſtributed it among them in very different portions; to one he gives a large, and to another a ſmall inheritance.

heritance. To one he gives ten, to another five, and to a third one talent. To all he imparts intellectual powers; on ſome he confers them in a higher, and on others in a lower degree. On Solomon and Daniel he liberally conferred wiſdom; to Abigail he gave a good underſtanding; to the wife of upright Job this donation ſeems to have been ſparingly adminiſtered. Bezaliel and Aholiab he furniſhed with exquiſite ſkill for executing fine work. Job hath been juſtly celebrated for his patience; Jona ſeems to have had but a ſmall ſhare of this amiable grace; the diſciples were weak in faith; the woman of Canaan was ſtrong in faith. By adminiſtering ſuch wonderful diverſity of gifts and graces, God richly diſplays his wiſdom and bounty; he communicates agreeable variety to the world and to the church, and renders every one ſubſervient to the beauty and good of the whole. Perfectly ſimilar is the conduct of the beſt men in the diſtribution of their goods and property. A father gives to ſome of his children more, and to others leſs; he is not obliged to give to every one an equal portion. A proprietor of lands beautifies ſome of his grounds with plants and ſhrubs and trees, whilſt he allows other fields to continue in a leſs cultivated ſtate. Some apartments of his houſe are richly decorated with fine furniture, others are occupied by moveables of a common and much coarſer ſort. Some of his ſervants are meanly clothed and work hard, others are handſomely dreſſed and do very little. All theſe

matters

matters are ſo adjuſted, without his incurring blame or cenſure; and ſhall the great Lord of the univerſe be found fault with, by his creatures, for acting in the ſame manner in the field of the world, and in the houſe of his church, that they do in the active ſcenes of life?

The tender mercy of God, expreſſed in my text, furniſhes another reply to the objections brought againſt the equity of the divine adminiſtration. As this pleaſant ſubject is introduced by the prophet for this very purpoſe, it merits at preſent our particular attention. The meſſage contained in the verſe before us, was ſent to the houſe of Iſrael, to reſolve the difficulty which they ſtarted, reſpecting the providence of God, in the words immediately preceding. And in the 18th chapter of this prophecy, where the Lord God, by his ſervant, is vindicating the equity of his laws from the charge of partiality and injuſtice, which had been preſumptuouſly brought againſt them, the ſame argument is there employed which is here uſed. 'I have no pleaſure in the death of 'him that dieth, ſaith the Lord God, where-'fore turn and live ye.' Pining away in their ſins, and languiſhing under the preſſure of awful judgments, the Iſraelites aſked how ſhould they then live. If we are deſtined, as the puniſhment of our iniquities, to ſuſtain complicated calamities, how can we cheriſh the hope of life and deliverance? To this queſtion Jehovah commands his ſervant to anſwer, 'As 'I live,

'I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure 'in the death of the wicked;' I neither deſire nor delight in their deſtruction. You ſuppoſe that you are puniſhed for the ſins of your fathers, and that I take pleaſure in afflicting you, but you are egregiouſly miſtaken; the calamities with which you are viſited, are the juſt retribution of your tranſgreſſions: I do not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, and I would much rather that you would repent and live, than periſh in your treſpaſſes. Indeed, if you perſiſt in refuſing to hearken to my calls when I invite you to return to me, if you ſet at nought my counſel, and will have none of my reproof, I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh. I will recompence you for all your abominations; mine eyes ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity, notwithſtanding I ſolemnly declare, that I have far greater complacency in your repentance and ſalvation.

The benevolent intention of God in communicating to men the good things they receive, in promulgating to them his perfect law, and revealing to them the riches of his grace, is to conduct them to holineſs and happineſs. Such is his clemency, that he exerciſes toward ſinners much long-ſuffering,—he waits to be gracious, that he may be exalted, in ſhewing mercy,—he affords them the moſt important advantages and aſſiſtances,—he warns them of their danger,—he grants them means of eſcape,—he allures them by his mercies,—he ſtrikes

ſtrikes them with awe by his judgments,—he invites,—he intreats,—he inſtructs by his word,—he awakens them by the remonſtrances of conſcience,—he ſtrives with them by his Spirit,—he offers to them the pardon of all their ſins, through the blood of Chriſt, with complete redemption from all evil; and enforces their acceptance of theſe precious benefits, by the moſt weighty conſiderations. He knocks at the door of their hearts, by his providence, word, and Spirit,—he tries to win them by mercies, and to alarm them by rebukes,—exhibiting to their view the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell. In few words, the Lord God doth all that becomes him, as ſupreme Legiſlator and Sovereign, to demonſtrate his good will and tender compaſſion to the children of men, even to the wicked. What ſhall God do more? He doth all that infinite wiſdom ſees proper, that he may reſcue the wicked from death; and had he gone farther, to accompliſh this kind purpoſe, their obedience and ſalvation would not have been matter of choice, but of neceſſity. No room then is left for complaint of the inequality of God's ways.

Theſe things I have ſpoken to bring down thoſe high thoughts which exalt themſelves againſt the knowledge of God,—to ſatisfy you that he doth all things well, and under this conviction, to induce you cordially to acquieſce in all his diſpenſations, and to rejoice, that he reigneth, who is the friend and guardian of his peculiar people.—Having replied

plied to the objections which have been urged againſt the equity of the divine adminiſtration, to which the words of my text were intended to be an anſwer. I proceed,

II. To eſtabliſh the truth of the propoſition, of which the moſt ſolemn aſſurance is here given, 'ſaith the Lord God, I have no plea-'ſure in the death of the wicked, but that the 'wicked turn from his evil way, and live.' This declaration contains a plain fundamental truth, a leading firſt principle in the doctrine of Scripture, which, though generally acknowledged, is far from being believed and improved as it ought. I ſhall therefore lay before you ſome of the principal evidences on which it reſts, not merely as a ſpeculative opinion, but as a practical truth, demanding your unſuſpecting confidence, that, through the divine bleſſing, I may eſtabliſh the faith of them that believe, and induce thoſe who do not believe, to yield to it the obedience of faith. It is confirmed by the ſolemn oath of Jehovah—by concurring teſtimonies of Scripture—by the miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt into this world—and the experience of mankind in all ages. Of each of theſe arguments I ſhall treat in their order. I ſay,

1. That the ſolemn oath of Jehovah confirms this comfortable truth, that he 'hath no 'pleaſure in the death of the wicked.' This is altogether a moſt extraordinary evidence, which requires to be inveſtigated with the greateſt

greateſt reverence and attention. When men 'ſwear in judgment, in righteouſneſs, and 'truth,' they appeal to the only living and true God, to witneſs the veracity of their teſtimony, and invoke him, as their righteous Judge, to vindicate the breach of this ſacred engagement. Such an oath, for confirmation (ſaith an inſpired writer), is intended to put an end to all ſtrife. Oaths are not to be taken on trivial occaſions, as to matters that may be otherwiſe determined, but when they become neceſſary in things of moment, apparently dubious, in order to put a period to thoſe controverſies among men which cannot otherwiſe be decided. In alluſion to this well known practice, the Lord God, in condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, confirms, by his oath, the gracious declaration emitted in the verſe before us; and becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, he ſwears by himſelf. 'As I live, 'ſaith the Lord God, as ſure as I am Jehovah, 'poſſeſſing eternal majeſty, power, and vera-'city, I have no pleaſure in the death of the 'wicked.' Such is his aſtoniſhing grace, that he hath been pleaſed to ſuperadd his oath to his word; not that his word requires confirmation; 'for heaven and earth ſhall paſs a-'way, but his words ſhall not paſs away;' but, to ſhew the perfect certainty of what he affirms, and to give the ſtrongeſt ſecurity for the accompliſhment of what he ſays, that we can either deſire or receive.—By vouchſafing to act in this manner, he gives a powerful check

check to that ſuſpicion which is inſeparably connected with guilt. Having abuſed his benefits, tranſgreſſed his law, and treated with contempt his glorious grace, conſcious of our ill deſert, we cannot believe that God will be merciful and gracious to thoſe who have thus incurred his juſt diſpleaſure. Being fickle, unconſtant, and perfidious creatures, we are apt fooliſhly to imagine that the ſtrength of Iſrael may repent, and prove variable like ourſelves. Thus do we controvert the truth aſſerted in my text, and ſuſpect both the clemency and veracity of Jehovah. How then ſhall the matter be decided? God, highly offended at the injurious ſentiments we entertain of his majeſty and mercy, might have left us to inherit our own folly. In wonderful compaſſion, for our encouragement, he hath ſolemnly ſworn, that 'he hath great complacency in the return 'and life of the wicked; who, convinced of 'their ſin and miſery, have recourſe to him 'for pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace.' What are we, that the bleſſed and only Potentate ſhould have in this manner condeſcended to pledge himſelf for our ſecurity and ſatisfaction? Under what pretext, and by what excuſe, can we poſſibly indulge in unbelief, and refuſe to ſet to our ſeal, that God is true? If an oath is intended to put an end to thoſe diſputes which ariſe between man and man, ought not the ſacred oath of the living God to put a period to the controverſy between God

God and man, reſpecting the divine benevolence and mercy toward ſinners of mankind?

2. The reviving truth thus ſolemnly affirmed, is eſtabliſhed by the concurring teſtimonies of Scripture. The firſt that claims our attention, is in the latter part of the verſe from which I am diſcourſing; which contains repeated invitations, with a warm expoſtulation, addreſſed to the Houſe of Iſrael: 'Turn ye, 'turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will 'ye die?' The call is doubled, to expreſs the affectionate earneſtneſs of God, who ſpeaks by his ſervant; to ſhew that his heart is ſet upon our return, and doing us good; whilſt it intimates our natural averſion to leave our evil ways, it ought to excite the greater attention in thoſe to whom it is addreſſed. The earneſt calls which are frequently directed in Scripture to the wicked, preſent inconteſtible evidence that the Lord hath no pleaſure in their death. The preſcription of repentance, as the means of their recovery, and the way to mercy, joined with the moſt perſuaſive entreaties to this becoming exerciſe, clearly demonſtrate the truth I am now eſtabliſhing; eſpecially when taken in connection with the rich proviſion made in the goſpel by infinite goodneſs, for effectually bringing men to God, from whom they had revolted. As the calls which God hath directed to ſinners, are exceeding gracious, ſo his proclamations of mercy are truly generous and encouraging. By theſe rich diſplays of tranſcendant compaſſion, which

which he ſeems to conſider as his higheſt glory, he gives the moſt powerful incitement to true penitence, which he repreſents as doing him the greateſt honour of which we are capable.

How ſublime, far ſurpaſſing our moſt elevated apprehenſions, is the divine clemency and benignity announced by Jehovah himſelf, of which the following are beautiful ſpecimens: 'Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' The wicked impious man is one of whom we have little hope. Is it poſſible that there can be mercy for ſuch a perſon? Yes, the Lord will abundantly pardon; he will multiply pardons to his multiplied tranſgreſſions. This is not the manner of men, who are not fond of frequently forgiving the ſame offences to the ſame individual; but, 'ſaith God, your ways are not my ways; for as the heaven is high above the earth, ſo are my thoughts above your thoughts.' By this elegant and grand ſimilitude, we are taught to cheriſh the moſt exalted conceptions of the glory of divine mercy. By the prophet Hoſea, the Almighty uſes ſimilar language,—'I will not (ſaith he) execute the fierceneſs of my wrath; I will not return, to deſtroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, who is implacable, unable to reſtrain his ſpirit, unwilling to be reconciled to thoſe who have offended him,

and

and who, though he promiſes fair, doth not perform. In the very ſame ſtrain ſpeaks the image of the inviſible God. 'It is not the 'will of your Father who is in heaven, that 'one of theſe little ones ſhould periſh. He 'that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt 'out.'—To proclamations of mercy, the Lord God hath been pleaſed to add the inſtitution of means of life and ſalvation, which, by his Spirit and bleſſing, he renders effectual for the converſion of the wicked. The great deſign of the ordinances he hath appointed, is to give him the glory and praiſe which is due to his name; 'of whom, through whom, and to 'whom are all things;' to intimate to us, that he is ready to accept and recompenſe the reaſonable ſervice of his creatures, performed in obedience to his command; and that employed in doing him homage, we may hope to enjoy his favour, and communion with him. To thoſe who diligently attend upon, and wiſely improve them, in humble dependence on his gracious aid, he hath promiſed his preſence and bleſſing; and aſſured them that they ſhall not wait on him in vain, nor ſerve him for nought. And doth not the preſcription of religious worſhip, which is one happy mean of the converſion of ſinners, plainly ſhew that the Lord God hath no pleaſure in our death? Unite together the ſeveral parts of which this argument is compoſed, and you may ſee the doctrine before us well ſupported and eſtabliſhed.

3. Let us advert to another ſtrong proof of

the divine clemency and good will toward men, derived from the miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt into this world, to accompliſh our redemption. Here, my brethren, we behold a moſt wonderful evidence of the infinite mercy and tender compaſſion of God, whether we conſider—the illuſtrious Perſon who was ſent into the world—the condeſcending manner in which he executed his miſſion, or—the benevolent purpoſe for which it was intended.—How glorious the Perſon whom God ſent into the world! In this, ſaith the Apoſtle John, 'was manifeſted 'the love of God toward us, becauſe that God 'ſent his only begotten Son into the world, 'that we might live through him. His name 'is Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, 'the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace, 'the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the 'Word of God, who made the worlds, and up-'holdeth all things. In nature, eſſence, and 'perfection, he is One with the living Father, 'God over all, bleſſed for ever; who is, who 'was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'

What ineffable love ſubſiſts between the Father and his only begotten Son, who is the expreſs image of his Perſon, poſſeſſing with him the ſame attributes and glory, and who with him forms the ſame plans, and executes the ſame purpoſes.—This Perſon of infinite dignity, the everlaſting object of his Supreme delight, God was pleaſed to ſend into the world, not arrayed with majeſty and power, not attended with circumſtances of magnificence

and

and ſplendor, but in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and in the low form of a ſervant. Whilſt he tabernacled on earth, he was 'a man of 'ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.' His poverty, temptations, afflictions, perſecutions, and ignominious death, open to view a ſubject of contemplation truly aſtoniſhing, and which can never be exhauſted. And for what purpoſe did the beloved Son of God ſuſtain all theſe indignities and diſtreſſes, and lay down his precious life, but that he might give the moſt illuſtrious diſplay of his diſintereſted love, and the ſtrongeſt teſtimony that the Lord God hath no pleaſure in the death of ſinners? This will farther appear, by conſidering the generous deſign of his advent; *namely*, to make reconciliation for iniquity—to endure the curſe denounced by the law againſt tranſgreſſion, which we had incurred,—and to become the end of the law, for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth. Having by his death declared the righteouſneſs and mercy of Jehovah, deſtroyed the works of the devil, and obtained eternal redemption for us, 'he liveth 'for ever, to make interceſſion for tranſgreſ-'ſors.' Through his prevalent mediation, God, who is rich in mercy, hath pardoned the moſt enormous crimes that have been committed in every age; the ſins not only of a day, a month, or a year, but even the treſpaſſes of thoſe who have long perſiſted in tranſgreſſion, he hath admitted them into favour, and conferred upon them eternal inheritance. And

are not theſe ſatisfying proofs that God hath no pleaſure in the death of ſinners? Once more,

4. The experience of mankind in all ages atteſts the comfortable truth affirmed in my text. To this I now appeal. Even thoſe who have deſpiſed the riches of God's goodneſs, which ought to have led them to repentance, and by their impenitence treaſured up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, have been favoured with the long ſuffering of God, who hath not ſpeedily executed ſentence upon their evil works. How conſpicuouſly diſplayed was the divine forbearance toward the old world, after the inhabitants had arrived at an enormous heighth of wickedneſs, and in after ages toward the children of Iſrael, notwithſtanding their multiplied provocations. And to every one of us, my hearers, hath not God exerciſed much long ſuffering patience? Enquire of the people of God, in every generation, what experience they have had of the divine mercy, and they will all concur, without ſo much as one diſſenting voice, in teſtifying that the Lord is gracious. With what a cloud of witneſſes are we encompaſſed, who all preſs forward to give evidence of this reviving truth. Come, then, all ye that fear God, and liſten, while they declare what God hath done for them, and you ſhall have abundant proofs of his tender compaſſions, which fail not. The teſtimony of ſome may ſerve to eſtabliſh the faith of others. Aſk at thoſe who are now inheriting the promiſes, who

who were once the children of wrath and disobedience, but obtained mercy, and through faith a good report, what are their sentiments on this subject? Patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, with multitudes from around the throne of God, would unanimously join their testimony, that the Lord God hath 'no pleasure in 'the death of the wicked.' 'For we ourselves '(say they) were sometime foolish, disobedient, 'deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, 'until the kindness and love of God our Saviour 'toward man appeared, and according to his 'mercy he saved us.' Enquire at the chosen and called, and faithful, who still continue on earth. One will acknowledge that he was an entire stranger to the power of godliness, destitute of love to God, and to his law, until it pleased the Lord God, merciful and gracious, to forgive him all trespasses, and to call him effectually, by his grace; in consequence of which he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man. Another will confess, My days were consumed with mourning, and my life with sorrow; I was so overwhelmed with an afflicting sense of sin, that I dreaded perishing in my transgressions. When in this condition, God, who comforteth the cast down, instead of making me feel the wrath I deserved, and feared, spoke home to my heart. 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are hea-'vy laden, and I will give you rest.' I suppose that it is unnecessary at present to bring forward any more proofs, to confirm the truth of

the propoſition I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh.

And now, my brethren, can you refuſe to admit and acquieſce in that great body of evidence which I have ſet before you, that the Lord our God taketh pleaſure in the converſion and life of the wicked. Thanks, eternal thanks, to him for thoſe tender mercies, the truth and grandeur of which I have this day attempted to celebrate. Hearken, ye profane contemners of things ſacred, ye proud and diſobedient, ye malicious and revengeful, ye intemperate and impure, ye ſlanderers and falſe accuſers, ye unjuſt and fraudulent, ye covetous and avaricious, 'God is not willing that any 'ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to re-'pentance.' This bleſſed aſſurance ought to penetrate your hearts, and to excite you to immediate compliance with this kind invitation. 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; why 'will ye die?' Wo be to that man who, by impenitence and unbelief, refuſes to attend to this gracious call. How terrifying will be the recollection of his conduct, when he ſhall be ſummoned to appear before the tribunal of the Almighty? Deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of the wonderful condeſcenſion and grace of Jehovah, proſtrate yourſelves before him; take with you words, and turn unto the Lord; ſay unto him, that you are encouraged by what you have heard of his tender compaſſion toward periſhing ſinners, to apply to him for relief in this time of need. Entreat with fervour

vour and importunity, that through the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, God may grant you the forgiveneſs of ſins; that, by his Holy Spirit, he would renew your nature, and effectually diſpoſe you to chooſe him for your everlaſting portion. Expreſs your gratitude for the revelation he hath given you of his rich mercy and grace; ſubſcribe to his ſovereign right of diſpenſing his benefits according to his good pleaſure; acknowledge your approbation of the method he hath appointed for conveying the bleſſings of his ſalvation; renounce thoſe iniquities in which you have indulged in times paſt; and wait with expectation on him who will not allow you to ſeek him in vain. And may God, who is love, take away all iniquity, receive you graciouſly, heal your backſlidings, love you freely, and give you comfortable evidence that his anger is turned away. To him be praiſe, and honour, and glory. *Amen.*

SERMON V.

THE DEATH AND EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED *.

ROMANS viii. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

GREAT objects are apt to dazzle and confound the beholder. The disciples of Jesus Christ, struck with astonishment, when contemplating the grandeur and magnificence of the temple, exclaimed, 'Master, Look what 'manner of stones, and what buildings!' The apostle Peter, on the mount of transfiguration, beholding his Lord's face shine as the sun, and his raiment white as the light, was so terribly afraid, that he knew not what he should say.—Great objects embarrass and perplex the writer or speaker, and give rise to much difficulty of expression. When God sent Nathan the prophet to his servant David, with the joyful tidings, that he would establish his house and throne

* This Sermon was preached at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

throne before him for ever, such was the magnitude of the promised blessing, and the deep impression it made upon the royal mind, that, unable to express what he felt, he uttered these words before the Lord, 'What can David say 'more unto thee?' And the apostle Paul, employed in surveying the peculiar privileges of the saints in Christ Jesus, and in opening the sacred springs of their divine consolations, transported with the greatness of the subject, makes a solemn pause, and then asks the question, 'What shall we say to these things?' Abundance of matter pressed upon his mind, which he could not find language to describe. Having mentioned what God hath already done to accomplish the salvation of his people, he boldly defies all their enemies. 'Who shall 'lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? 'it is God that justifieth.' And in the words I have read as the subject of discourse, he repeats the triumphant challenge, 'Who is he 'that condemneth?' The accuser of the brethren, the judgment of men, and our own hearts, often unite in condemning us as worthy of death. We indeed deserve condemnation, and justly might the awful sentence be executed upon us, denounced in the law of God against transgression. To all the charges brought against us, we reply, in the words of the apostle, 'It is God that justifieth, who 'pardons our sins, and accepts of us as right-'eous in Jesus Christ.' His honour is vindicated, his authority is established, his justice is

ſatisfied, his holineſs is diſplayed, his law is magnified by the obedience and death of his own Son. Conſcience alſo is pacified by the ſprinkling of his precious blood on our hearts. 'It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is 'riſen again from the dead, who is even at 'the right hand of God, who alſo maketh in-'terceſſion for us.'

In diſcourſing from theſe words, four things demand our attention; namely, the death—the reſurrection—the exaltation—and the interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt.—Bleſſed God, we beſeech thee to aſſiſt and animate our meditations on theſe great and intereſting ſubjects; grant us experience of the happy effects reſulting from the death and ſubſequent glory of our compaſſionate Saviour. The

I. Article that requires to be diſcuſſed, is the death of Jeſus Chriſt. 'It is Chriſt that 'died.' Let us fix our attention on this wonderful event, and view it for a little in ſome of thoſe inſtructive lights in which it is exhibited in Scripture. The death of Jeſus Chriſt juſtly merits our moſt ſerious conſideration, our higheſt admiration, and moſt grateful thankſgivings. His miraculous nativity, his moſt holy life, his ſtupendous miracles, and divine doctrines, could not have accompliſhed our redemption, unleſs they had been followed by his death, to which they all had reſpect, or owed their importance.

Contemplate it then as the cleareſt demonſtration

ſtration of the love of God, that paſſeth knowledge. From this ſacred ſource the death of Jeſus Chriſt proceeded, which obtained for us eternal redemption. 'Herein is love; not 'that we loved God, but that he loved us, 'and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our 'ſins. Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and hath 'given himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacri-'fice, to God for a ſweet ſmelling ſavour.' All the manifeſtations which God hath given of his glorious attributes, are truly grand and wonderful, but the diſplay afforded of his unparalleled love, is ſurpaſſingly great, and moſt aſtoniſhing. The works which he hath done, ſhew forth his eternal power and godhead,—the heavens declare his glory,—the earth is full of the riches of his goodneſs,—our continued preſervation gives proof of his kind Providence,—but the death of Chriſt exhibits a moſt convincing evidence, that 'God is love, 'and dwelleth in love.' Mankind are ſuſtained by means of a ſtrong combination of intereſts, whereby they are united like the ſtones which form the arch of a building. Thus intimately connected, and dependent on one another, the head cannot ſay to the foot, nor the prince to the peaſant, I have no need of thee. But the eternal God, my brethren, the ſupreme Lord of all, poſſeſſed of conſummate, unchangeable felicity, who ſtands not in need of us, or our imperfect ſervices, hath demonſtrated his great love toward us, in ſending his only begotten and well beloved Son into the

world, that we might live through him. He ſet him forth to be the propitiation for our ſins, he made his ſoul an offering for ſin. Jeſus Chriſt bare our iniquities on his own body, on the tree, and gave his life a ranſom for many.—The death of Chriſt, the nobleſt proof of the love of God, derives peculiar glory from the miſerable condition, and neceſſitous circumſtances of thoſe for whom he ſuffered. 'For when we were yet without ſtrength, in 'due time Chriſt died for the ungodly. For 'ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die, 'yet peradventure, for a good man ſome 'would even dare to die; but God com-'mendeth his love toward us, in that, while 'we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us.' Having abuſed the noble powers with which we were furniſhed, having apoſtatized from God, our dignity, duty, and happineſs, we had become ſervants to ſin, and the captives of Satan; having gone down to the gates of deſtruction, we were lying under ſentence of condemnation and death; inſenſible of our miſery, and dead in treſpaſſes, we were indifferent to deliverance. Such was our deplorable condition, when Jeſus Chriſt, not waiting until we relented, and cried for mercy, ſtept in to our relief, and, in tender compaſſion, died, to reſcue us from death, and to reſtore us to forfeited life and happineſs.

Let us next ſurvey the wonderful circumſtances with which the death of Chriſt was accompanied. Every thing relative to this great event,

event, the admiration of heaven and earth, was fixed in the determinate counſels of Jehovah, foretold by his ſervants the prophets, and prefigured by inſtructive types and emblems. Rulers, Jews, and Gentiles, as the apoſtles declare, were gathered together, to do whatſoever the counſel and hand of God determined before to be done. We ought, however, accurately to diſtinguiſh between the purpoſe of Jehovah, who, with conſummate wiſdom, adjuſted every incident attending the death of Jeſus Chriſt,—the wickedneſs of the barbarous inſtruments who crucified him, and the voluntary act of Jeſus Chriſt, who had power to lay down his life, and to take it again. Judas betrayed him—officers apprehended him—Pilate condemned him—and the ſoldiers crucified him; but all theſe things happened with his own conſent. Had he chooſed, he could have eluded all their artifices; he could have eſcaped from their hands, or called in legions of angels to his aſſiſtance. The fact is notorious, that Jeſus Chriſt voluntarily ſubmitted to death. His moſt inveterate enemies, through implacable malice, were not more ſolicitous to put him to death, than he was deſirous to diſplay his love to his Church, by laying down his life; and therefore he is ſaid, with the greateſt propriety, to have given himſelf for us. He died by the appointment of the Father, he was crucified by the wicked hands of men, and yet, of his own free choice, he ſuſtained his direful ſufferings, and agonizing

nizing death.—Contemplate the circumſtances of diſtreſs and anguiſh which preceded his giving up the Ghoſt. Place yourſelves for a few moments by your compaſſionate Saviour, extended upon the croſs, behold him enduring for you the moſt exquiſite pain and torture. See his beneficent hands and feet, always employed in doing good, nailed to the accurſed tree, his ſacred head pierced with thorns, his body, the peculiar workmanſhip and temple of God, heaving with anguiſh. Mark the ignominy and diſgrace with which, though perfectly innocent, he was moſt undeſervedly loaded, when ſubmitting to a violent death, due to the moſt infamous offenders, not in a ſecret corner, but in a public place, and made a ſpectacle to the upbraiding, inſulting multitude. Think of the inward diſtreſs and ſorrow he muſt have felt, when, though poſſeſſed of divine ſtrength, to ſupport him, and enjoying the moſt glorious proſpects, to animate him, he was ſore amazed, and very heavy,—'his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto 'death.' How moving, how affecting the ſcene of deepeſt affliction, exhibited in the death of Chriſt, whereby he obtained eternal redemption for us, who had committed things worthy of death.

Conſider farther the bleſſed effects which reſult from the death of Chriſt. I ſtay not to ſpeak of that glory to God in the higheſt, which redounds from the rich manifeſtation of the perfections of Jehovah, given by this aſto-

niſhing

niſhing event. I only mention a few of thoſe ineſtimable benefits procured by his laying down his life for us. Among theſe I reckon the pardon of ſin, deliverance from the guilt and puniſhment of that accurſed thing which offends God, corrupts our nature, poiſons our comforts, and embitters our croſſes. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins.—Adoption into the family of God, with the participation of all the glorious privileges enjoyed by his beloved children. God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons.—Deliverance from the depravity of our nature, with reſtoration to the image of our Maker. 'Jeſus Chriſt gave himſelf 'for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and 'to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zea-'lous of good works; and as he was raiſed 'from the dead, by the glory of the Father, 'ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life.'—Complete victory over all the many powerful enemies of our ſalvation, which he was manifeſted to deſtroy, whom he ſpoiled and triumphed over on his croſs, having aſſured his choſen and called, and faithful, that through his blood and the word of his teſtimony, they ſhall be more than conquerors.—Eternal life and glory in the immediate preſence and full enjoyment of God, the ſociety of angels, and all the redeemed, with everlaſting exemption from infirmities, troubles, and temptations, according as it is written, 'Chriſt died for us, that

'we

'we might live together with him.'—Such is the ſource from whence the death of Chriſt proceeded; ſuch are the circumſtances and precious fruits wherewith it is attended. True Chriſtians, therefore, ought to rejoice in their Redeemer's croſs, there being now no condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit. And tranſgreſſors, convinced of the dreadful deſert of ſin, and their being under condemnation, ſhould be induced to flee for refuge to Jeſus Chriſt, the hope ſet before them.

II. We now turn our attention to the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, of whom my text ſaith, that he is riſen again.—With the vaſt importance of this fundamental article of our faith, our minds ought to be deeply impreſſed. For this purpoſe, recollect that the ſame omnipotent arm that delivered him to death, raiſed him from the grave, that he might completely fulfil the gracious purpoſes for which he ſuffered. Indeed the death of Chriſt could not have obtained our ſalvation, had not God publicly teſtified his acceptance of the payment he made of our debt, by raiſing him from the dead, whereby our obligation to puniſhment was cancelled by raiſing him from the dead. His death is the meritorious cauſe of our juſtification, believers in Chriſt being conſidered as ſuffering in his death the puniſhment of ſin; and as virtually raiſed up in him, they are comprehended in the diſcharge he received at his reſurrection. As the expiation of our tranſgreſſions depends entirely on his death,

death, ſo the acceptance of our perſons flows from his reſurrection, according to the teſtimony of our apoſtle, who ſays, 'that he was 'delivered for our offences, and roſe again for 'our juſtification.' If Chriſt then is not riſen, the demands of divine juſtice are not ſatisfied, God is not reconciled, death is not conquered, principalities and powers are not vanquiſhed, ſinners cannot be ſaved. Of ſuch high importance is the doctrine of the reſurrection of Chriſt in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, that it hath been emphatically ſtyled the key-ſtone, that unites together the whole building, which ſuſtains all our hopes.

Let us then review the evidence whereby this momentous truth is confirmed and eſtabliſhed. The proofs of Chriſt's reſurrection, are of two kinds, prophetical and hiſtorical. The firſt prophetical witneſſes who delivered their teſtimony, were that ancient and venerable order of men called patriarchs, or heads of families, ſome of whoſe actions, as well as their ſayings, were in ſeveral inſtances figurative of the great Meſſiah, in the faith of whom they lived and died. In this light, we conſider the hiſtory which relates to the offering up of Iſaac, who was intentionally offered in ſacrifice, and again received from the dead, and that which records the depreſſion and exaltation of Joſeph.—The next witneſs, whoſe evidence is tranſmitted to us, is the law, which ſerves as a ſchoolmaſter to lead us to Chriſt. To him all its inſtitutions were deſigned to conduct

conduct the people of God. For example, the command given to the prieſt, that on the morrow after the Sabbath, he ſhould wave a ſheaf of the firſt fruits before the Lord, for the ſanctification of the future harveſt, ſuggeſted, that on the morrow after the Sabbath, Jeſus Chriſt was to ariſe from the dead, the firſt fruits of them that ſleep; the earneſt of the harveſt to take place at the end of the world. The entrance of the high prieſt into the holieſt of all, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, after having purified the tabernacle with blood, prefigured the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.—The prophets then follow, who delivered their teſtimony, ſome in the ancient way of figure or type, as Jona and Joſhua the high prieſt, others by expreſs declarations, as Iſaiah in the 52d chapter of his prophecies, and David, in that famous paſſage, recorded in the 16th Pſalm, which the apoſtle Peter affirms; he ſpake not of his own perſon, but of the reſurrection of Chriſt.—We cloſe this part of the evidence, by reciting the memorable prediction uttered by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf; 'Behold, '(ſaid he to his diſciples) the Son of man ſhall 'be betrayed unto the chief prieſts, and unto 'the ſcribes, and they ſhall condemn him to 'death, and ſhall deliver him to the Gentiles, 'to mock and to ſcourge, and to crucify, and 'the third day he ſhall riſe again.'

Let us review the hiſtorical evidences who atteſt this memorable fact. The firſt who gave their teſtimony were the holy angels, who deſcended

ſcended from heaven on this occaſion, and thus addreſſed the devout women, who early viſited the ſepulchre, wherein the body of our Lord was interred, 'Why ſeek ye (ſaid theſe 'celeſtial meſſengers) the living among the 'dead, he is not here, he is riſen, as he ſaid 'unto you.' No leſs extraordinary witneſſes aſcended from the lower parts of the earth, the ſaints who ſlept in the duſt, and came out of their graves after his reſurrection, went into the holy city, appeared unto many, that yielded undoubted credit to the unexpected proofs of the certainty of what had happened.—Indeed Jeſus Chriſt himſelf confirmed beyond all controverſy, the truth of his reſurrection, by his frequent appearances to many different perſons, who far from being credulous, were ſlow of heart, and reluctant to believe. After he aroſe from the dead, he was ſeen by Mary Magdalene, by other devout women with her, by the two diſciples going to Emmaus, by the apoſtles Peter and James, by the eleven, and afterward by above five hundred brethren at once. He appeared to men and women, in public and private unexpectedly, and by appointment, and after repeated converſations with many upon earth, he ſhewed himſelf from heaven, firſt to Stephen, then to the apoſtle Paul, and afterward to the beloved diſciple. The truth of the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt is demonſtrated not only by the concurring teſtimonies of thoſe who ſaw and converſed with him but by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the miracles

cles wrought by the apoſtles, the ſermons of thoſe who publicly preached this doctrine to multitudes, by whom it was believed; the courage of thoſe who ſuffered in confirmation of the faith, and the ſacred inſtitution of the Lord's day, obſerved in the church for above ſeventeen hundred years, in ſolemn commemoration of that great event. From the uniform teſtimony of all theſe evidences, we believe and are ſure, that the Lord is riſen indeed *.

We proceed to mention ſome of the glorious purpoſes accompliſhed by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt. From among many I ſhall ſelect a few. Our faith and hope in God is hereby confirmed, for it is expreſsly aſſerted, that he raiſed him up from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God. In this wonderful tranſaction of bringing from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Almighty acted in the amiable character of the God of peace, who, having dropt the rod of his anger, hath taken up the ſceptre of grace, and is perfecting his people in every good work, working in them that which is well pleaſing in his ſight. The contemplation of Jehovah, thus publicly acknowledging himſelf well pleaſed with the obedience and atonement of Jeſus Chriſt, ought firmly to eſtabliſh our minds in the belief of his love, power, righteouſneſs, and truth, moſt illuſtriouſly

* For the above arrangement of evidences, I am indebted to Dr Horne, who hath beautifully illuſtrated them in his fourth diſcourſe, entitled, "Jeſus riſen."

luſtriouſly diſplayed in reſtoring to him again that life which he laid down for us.—The reſurrection of Chriſt was followed by the plentiful effuſion of the Holy Spirit. As the certain demonſtration and glorious effect of Chriſt having riſen from the dead, the promiſe of the Father was fulfilled, the Holy Ghoſt was ſhed forth from on high upon his diſciples, who were thereby endowed with wiſdom to teach, and power to confirm the doctrine of their divine Maſter, and furniſhed with patience and fortitude to ſuffer in his cauſe. Thus qualified for their work, they triumphed over the vain philoſophy of the world, the arguments of the ſubtle, the diſcourſes of the eloquent, the power of princes, the inclinations of corrupt nature, the force of cuſtom, the pleaſures of ſin, and the machinations of Satan. By the ſame Spirit which is communicated to the church of Chriſt, as a permanent bleſſing and happy fruit of his reſurrection, the moſt benevolent purpoſes are accompliſhed, the minds of men are illuminated with divine knowledge, they are convinced in their conſciences of ſin, their hearts are purified into obedience, their ſteps are conducted in the paths of righteouſneſs, their ſouls are filled with joy, and peace in believing.—Beſides, the reſurrection of our Lord and Saviour affords his faithful diſciples the moſt poſitive aſſurance, the moſt glorious pattern, and certain pledge of their future triumph over the grave, and reſurrection to eternal life. How reviving the words of Jeſus Chriſt

Chriſt to them that love him! 'Becauſe I live 'ye ſhall live alſo.' Chriſt having riſen from the dead, the firſt fruits of them that ſleep; they that are Chriſt's ſhall afterwards riſe at his coming. To this glorious advent, which is often predicted and promiſed, we look forward with faith and hope and joy, in the full expectation, that the Saviour will then change our vile bodies, which are formed of the duſt, ſuſtained by earthly ſupports, ſubject to manifold diſtempers, inſtrumental in the commiſſion of ſin, and liable to death and corruption; that they may be faſhioned like unto his own glorious body, ſpiritual, powerful, immortal, diveſted of natural appetites, in no need of preſent aſſiſtances neceſſary to their preſervation, and never more in danger of diſſolution. This bleſſed alteration of our corporeal ſyſtem, ſhall be executed according to the working whereby he is able to ſubdue all things unto himſelf, by his omnipotence, for whom all things are poſſible.—Delightful proſpect! Improve it Chriſtians, in all your diſtreſſes, under the loſſes you ſuſtain by the death of friends, and in the views of your own diſſolution. If the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies by his ſpirit that dwelleth in you.

III. We are next to treat the third article in my text, the exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt, who is at the right hand of God.

We

We have already contemplated him in the agonies of death, followed by the triumphs of his reſurrection; and now we are to elevate our minds, to behold him ſeated at the right hand of Jehovah. What a prodigious change of ſtate, what an aſtoniſhing reverſe of condition from that through which he paſſed in this world! When on earth he was lodged in a ſtable, fitted up for the accommodation of the beaſts of the field. In heaven he is exalted to the higheſt glory, in the preſence of God, ſurrounded by myriads of celeſtial hoſts. In his humiliation he was tempted by Satan, and haraſſed by the powers or darkneſs, who endeavoured to counteract the great deſign he had in view to accompliſh. In his exaltation, ten thouſand times ten thouſand of holy angels, who excel in ſtrength, inceſſantly adore him, and rejoice in executing his pleaſure. Here below he was deſpiſed and rejected of men, who hid from him their faces, and excluded him from their ſociety. In the Zion above, he is the head, the ornament, the delight of the general aſſembly convened around the throne of God. In the celeſtial regions he is crowned with glory and honour, univerſally admired, and extolled very high, as 'the Prince of the kings of 'the earth, the Saviour of the Church, who 'was dead, and is alive, and liveth for ever-'more.' Contemplating our bleſſed Redeemer, in his exalted ſtate, we behold him exchanging the labours and ſorrows of his former humble condition, and the pains of death for

for the reſt, and felicity of a glorious immortality, in the preſence of God; having laid aſide the vail that intercepted the rays of his divinity, he appears in his native ſplendor and glory.

Let us take a more extenſive view of this favourite object, Chriſt at the right hand of God. The words muſt not be underſtood in their literal ſenſe, as if the Almighty had thoſe bodily parts, which belong to the human form. Expreſſions of this ſort are uſed in condeſcenſion to our weakneſs, to aſſiſt our feeble apprehenſions of the glory to which our great Mediator is exalted in heaven. The monarchs of eaſtern nations were anciently accuſtomed to ſhew reſpect for thoſe on whom they meant to confer ſome extraordinary favour, by placing them at their right hand. A remarkable inſtance is recorded of Solomon king of Iſrael, who cauſed a ſeat to be ſet for his mother, and ſhe ſat on his right hand. In alluſion to this practice, the glory to which Jeſus Chriſt is advanced, is ſet forth by his ſitting at the right hand of God. The expreſſion may denote, the honour and dignity, the felicity and joy, the power and authority of which he is poſſeſſed. I ſay it points out

The honour and dignity to which Jeſus Chriſt is exalted. Viewing him in the high character of God over all bleſſed for ever, he cannot poſſibly admit of any real advancement or acceſſion to his eſſential immutable glory. His exaltation, therefore, only intimates the more eminent

eminent manifeſtation of his tranſcendant excellencies and ſupreme divinity, after the vail of his profound humiliation was laid aſide. With reſpect to his human nature and mediatorial character, God hath highly exalted him, having raiſed him to the poſſeſſion of that glory he had with him before the world was made. He hath given him a name, which is above every name; Jeſus Chriſt did not receive what he had not formerly enjoyed, but in his office as Mediator he was admitted to the enjoyment of what, as God, he poſſeſſed from everlaſting. Having purged our ſins, he ſat down on the right hand of the Majeſty on high, being made ſo much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they. He is dignified and honoured, on account of his ſupreme excellence, the glorious conqueſts he hath obtained, the arduous work he hath executed, the high ſtation which he occupies, the immenſe treaſure of which he hath the entire diſpoſal. The heavenly intelligences, therefore, as well as the redeemed from among men, unite in preſenting before him their adorations and praiſes, in which we hope for ever to join. Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, ſay the angels and the elders around the throne, to receive power and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour and glory, and bleſſing.

The exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt at the right hand of God, farther intimates the felicity and joy to which he is advanced. In thy preſence,

ſaid the royal prophet, ſpeaking in the perſon of our Redeemer, to his heavenly Father, 'is 'fulneſs of joys, and at thy right hand are 'pleaſures for evermore.' Theſe joys and pleaſures are doubtleſs poſſeſſed by him in degrees infinitely ſuperior to all the ſaints and angels in heaven. There he, who once died on the croſs, and ſlept in the ſepulchre, lives and reigns, filled with exquiſite delight, and encircled by incomprehenſible majeſty and glory. Though, when upon earth, he was a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief, yet now, having vanquiſhed all his enemies, he is perfectly bleſſed with conſummate happineſs and joy. What divine ſatisfaction, what unutterable triumph, muſt ariſe to the chief Shepherd of Iſrael, the Prince of Peace, from the everlaſting perpetuity of his throne and kingdom, the glory that redounds to God, and the ſalvation that accrues to his faithful followers, from his gracious interpoſition in their behalf, when ready to periſh. Explore the moſt refined pleaſures with which the ſons of men are acquainted, from whence they derive the higheſt gratifications, and you will find them to be as nothing, if compared to the pure and ſublime delights enjoyed by our bleſſed Saviour, at the right hand of the Majeſty on high. "His glory, O "God, is made great in thy ſalvation, for thou "haſt made him moſt bleſſed for ever; thou "haſt made him exceeding glad with thy coun-"tenance." In the proſpect of this joy, he endured

dured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame.—Once more,

The exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt at the right hand of God denotes the power and authority with which he is inveſted. When about to depart out of this world, he acknowledged, in his interceſſory prayer to his Father, that he had given him power over all fleſh. Before he gave commiſſion to his diſciples to teach and baptize all nations, he aſſured them, that all power in heaven and on earth was committed into his hands. The apoſtle Paul, when treating of the operation of God's mighty power, whereby Jeſus Chriſt was ſet at his own right hand, affirms, 'that he is far above all principa-'lity and power, and might, and dominion, and 'every name that is named, not only in this 'world, but in that which is to come; and that 'God hath put all things under his feet, and gi-'ven him to be head over all things to the 'church.' To this end he not only died, but 'roſe and revived, that he might be Lord both 'of the dead and of the living.' According to ancient prophecy, 'there is given unto him do-'minion and glory, and a kingdom; all people, 'nations, and languages, ſhall ſerve him;' and now from the midſt of his throne he proclaims, by his own majeſtic voice. 'Behold, I am alive 'for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of 'death and the inviſible world.' Comfortable thought! Being, by the right hand of God exalted, he hath power to grant us repentance and remiſſion of ſins, to render us and our ſer-

vices acceptable to God, to ſupply our neceſſities, to defeat every adverſe power, and to execute judgment upon both the righteous and the wicked.

What a glorious proſpect have we enjoyed of Jeſus Chriſt, who is at the right hand of God. Though he long ago left this earth, as to his perſonal preſence, yet he now is enthroned in glory above, to complete the ſalvation of his people, which he procured by his obedience unto death. The believing contemplation of our exalted Redeemer, ought to animate us to activity in the whole of our ſpiritual warfare, and to inſpire us with fortitude and hope, when conflicting with our ſpiritual enemies. The charges which they bring againſt us, are fully anſwered by Jeſus Chriſt, who hath made an end of ſin, ſpoiled principalities and powers, fulfilled the demands of the law, and overcome the world; and theſe enemies who could not vanquiſh our Saviour when clothed with infirmities in the form of a ſervant, cannot poſſibly conquer his members, now that he is elevated to the higheſt glory. Chriſtians, therefore, crucified with Chriſt in his death, raiſed up together with him to newneſs of life, in virtue of his reſurrection, in conſequence of his exaltation, ſet down with him in heavenly places, ought to triumph in the ſecurity which their Almighty Saviour will afford them, in the tender compaſſion that he ſtill feels for them, in the comfortable acceſs, which through him they enjoy, into the divine preſence, in the plentiful

plentiful ſupply of their wants, of which he hath aſſured them, in the hope of the glory, to which, in due time, he will conduct them, and in their everlaſting advancement with him, to the right hand of power.—Unbelieving, diſobedient tranſgreſſors, who neglect and deſpiſe Jeſus Chriſt, ought to be greatly alarmed by a ſenſe of their guilt and danger, in refuſing to bow to the ſceptre of his grace, and to honour him in his exaltation. If you perſiſt in your ſin and folly, be aſſured you ſhall certainly periſh by the rod of his anger, when his wrath begins to burn. He is infinitely able and fully determined to make his enemies his footſtool. The knee that will not bow to him, the tongue that will not confeſs him, in judgment he will condemn. Cordially acknowledge then, without delay, the dignity, grace, and power of Jeſus Chriſt, which the ſtouteſt hearted, the moſt implacable of his enemies ſhall one day be obliged to confeſs, and give unto him the glory due unto his name.

IV. I ſhall next ſpeak of the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, who, in his exalted ſtate, maketh interceſſion for us. The apoſtle Paul, far from affirming that the death of Jeſus Chriſt is the ſole ground of our ſalvation, aſcribes it alſo to his reſurrection, exaltation, and interceſſion, on all which it certainly depends. In this laſt mentioned article, he deſcribes the Saviour's employment at the right hand of God, whereby he gives admirable proof of his adorable

grace, of his love to his church, and tender ſolicitude for their ſafety and happineſs. To accompliſh our redemption, he not only came down from heaven, and having aſſumed human nature, ſpent a ſorrowful afflicted life upon earth, which was terminated by a painful accurſed death, but reaſſuming his life, he went into the preſence of God, where he maketh interceſſion for us. This interceſſion we ſuppoſe to conſiſt in his continual appearance as our great high Prieſt before the Father, where he effectually pleads the infinite merit of his atoning ſacrifice in behalf of his people, in order to their deliverance from the evils to which they are expoſed, and their enjoyment of every bleſſing neceſſary to their complete eternal ſalvation.—For the ſucceſsful performance of this important work, he is admirably qualified. Poſſeſſed of perfect knowledge, he needs not that any ſhould teſtify to him of man; he is intimately acquainted with the various conditions of all his diſciples, with all the exigencies of their ſeveral ſtates, with all the deſires of their hearts, and all the ſupplies proper for their benefit. Being merciful and full of compaſſion, and having been in all points tempted as we are, (ſin excepted) he is touched, even in his elevated ſtation, with the feeling of our infirmities, he is deeply intereſted in our ſufferings, and ever ready to communicate relief in all our diſtreſſes, according to his promiſe. All the treaſures of wiſdom and underſtanding being hid in him, he never miſtakes the cauſe or

intereſt

intereſt of any individual; and ſo ſucceſsfully doth he conduct his mediation, that he never fails to obtain his requeſt from God, who always gives him the deſires of his heart. Pleading in the character of Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, the cauſe of juſtice and equity; all that he claims, it becomes the holineſs, the righteouſneſs, and veracity of Jehovah to beſtow. Intimately united with thoſe for whom he intercedes, who are the objects of his everlaſting love, the perſons for whom he laid down his life, and with whom he is ſo joined, as to be one Spirit; his intereſt is cloſely connected with theirs, his honour is inſeparably interwoven with their ſalvation. He muſt then be a prevalent interceſſor, in whoſe hands all our concerns are perfectly ſafe; as a Prince he hath power with God and prevaileth; of which the perfection of his ſacrifice, the promiſe of the Father, the deſign of his mediation, and the experience of his church in all ages, give the moſt ſatisfying aſſurance. Such are the noble qualifications which Jeſus Chriſt poſſeſſes as our advocate with the Father.

The extenſive range we have taken in our meditations upon Jeſus Chriſt, having already occupied ſo much time, we only ſtay to take a curſory view of the delicious fruits ariſing from his interceſſion, of theſe we ſhall ſhew you a few ſamples, from which you may judge of his tranſcendent excellence, and their ineſtimable worth.—Free acceſs into the divine preſence, with benefit and comfort, where the diſciples

of Chriſt enjoy delightful communion with God, receive the certain pledges of his love, and the bleſſed earneſts of his glory.—Favourable acceptance to their ſervices and ſpiritual ſacrifices, which being preſented with the incenſe of his interceſſion, become acceptable and well pleaſing unto the Lord.—The glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, whom he aſſured his diſciples, he would ſend to them after his departure, that he might accompliſh the great purpoſes of their ſanctification and conſolation.—The full refutation of all the calumnious charges brought againſt them by the accuſer of the brethren, the ſentence of condemnation is reverſed, and complete abſolution is obtained from deſerved puniſhment.—Renewed ſupplies of grace and ſtrength, ſuited to their various circumſtances, that they may be enabled to vanquiſh temptations, to perform duties, to ſuſtain afflictions; for all his diſciples he prays, as he did for the apoſtle Peter, 'that 'their faith fail not; that they may be kept 'from evil.'—The final elevation of all the redeemed to the preſence and enjoyment of God, is likewiſe attributed to the interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, for thus he pleads in their behalf, 'Father, I will that thoſe whom thou haſt gi-'ven me, be with me where I am, that they 'may behold my glory.' On theſe and other accounts, they are ſaid to be ſaved by his life, which is employed in ſecuring their ſalvation. Such are the precious fruits of Chriſt's interceſſion, with which we finiſh our illuſtration of the

ſpirited

ſpirited reply ſuggeſted in my text, to thoſe who preſume to condemn and give judgment againſt Chriſtians. We conclude the ſubject with the reviving aſſurance of the Son of God, recorded John v. 24. 'Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life; and ſhall not come into condemnation, but hath paſſed from death to life.'

If ſuch is their happy ſtate who are in Chriſt Jeſus, how miſerable your condition, who are yet in your ſins. You know well that you juſtly deſerve condemnation; 'for by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; the wages of ſin is death; he that believeth not, is condemned already.' Unleſs the awful ſentence is reverſed, you periſh for ever. You have heard of the rich proviſion made for your deliverance by the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. Deeply ſenſible of your ſin and guilt and danger, have immediate recourſe to the all-ſufficient Redeemer, who, according to the ſcriptures, died for our ſins, roſe again the third day, is now exalted to the right hand of God, where he maketh interceſſion for tranſgreſſors. Thankfully accept of him as the unſpeakable gift of God, and cordially ſubmit to him in all the important characters he ſuſtains, that being made of God unto you for wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption, you may henceforth glory only in the Lord. Renounce all your iniquities, to whoſe uſurped tyranny you have yielded ſub-

jection in times paſt; and devote your beſt ſervices without reſerve to God, through the Mediator, that you may keep his word, and live to his honour. Under the conſciouſneſs of your depravity and unworthineſs, what ample encouragement to theſe becoming exerciſes, may you derive from the interceſſion of our Advocate with the Father. Seeing then that we have a great High Prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our profeſſion. Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may find grace to help us in time of need *.

* Heb. iv. 16.

INTRO-

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

COMMUNION SERVICE *.

THE humiliation, ſufferings, and death, to which the only begotten Son of God was pleaſed to ſubmit, that he might obtain our ſalvation, are truly grand and intereſting events. No ſuch magnificent ſcene was ever exhibited as that which is repreſented in the Lord's Supper, wherein theſe great and wonderful occurrences are commemorated. No ſuch aſtoniſhing tranſactions were ever recorded in the annals of the univerſe, as thoſe which this ordinance is intended to call to remembrance. No ſuch luminous proſpect was ever opened to view, as that which is here ſet before our eyes. Nor is the benefit celebrated in this ſacred inſtitution leſs intereſting than glorious. It concerns not ſo much the inhabitants of another world, as the citizens of this earth whereon we live; not ſo much another ſpecies of creatures as the human race, whereof we are individuals. It is not limited to a ſingle family, tribe, or nation, to perſons of one rank or condition, or of one generation. It extends to people of every region, kindred, and language, to perſons of every denomination, whether high or low, to men of every age, from the commencement of time until the conſummation of all things, when the angel ſhall lift up his hand to

* After reading Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28.

to heaven, and ſwear by him that liveth for ever, that time ſhall be no longer.—The Lord's Supper is truly a ſolemn and venerable ordinance. It is the abridgement of all that is excellent and grand, in the glorious goſpel of the Son of God. It is the ſanctuary where God and his people meet and converſe together. It is the entertainment where Jeſus Chriſt vouchſafes his preſence to his diſciples, and they receive the pledges of his love, and the earneſts of his ſalvation. It is the glaſs wherein the Lord exhibits himſelf to their view, and they ſo contemplate his glory, as to be changed into his image. It is the memorial of his incomparable love, and the becoming teſtimony of their gratitude and fidelity. In every view this divine inſtitution is intended to diſtinguiſh from the men of the world the followers of Jeſus Chriſt; whilſt it ſerves to convey to them the moſt important benefits which conſtitute their peculiar privilege and felicity. From theſe few remarks it plainly appears, that the upright diſciples of the Son of God, who keep his word, who love his ſalvation, and thankfully acknowledge his rich grace, are the only perſons who participate of our Lord's Supper, with real comfort and advantage. To perſons of an oppoſite character, God ſaith, 'What have you 'to do to declare my ſtatutes, or to take my 'covenant in your mouths.' Why would you be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, by eating and drinking unworthily? why would you offer indignity to the crucified Redeemer, vilify

vilify the price of redemption, and uſurp a privilege to which, in your preſent ſtate, you have no juſt claim? Before, therefore, we proceed to diſpenſe this holy ordinance, it is highly proper, that, according to the laudible practice of this church, I deſcribe, on the one hand, the temper and conduct of thoſe who are excluded by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt from this ſolemn feſtival; and on the other, characterize thoſe who are invited by him to partake of this feaſt of love.

The Lord Jeſus Chriſt excludes from this ſacred inſtitution thoſe who are ignorant of the leading truths and duties contained in the Holy Scriptures. Did ſuch people conſider the word of God as a precious treaſure, they would diligently ſearch it, that they might find that wiſdom and underſtanding which is more to be deſired than fine gold—If inſenſible of its excellence, worth, and utility, you ſtudy not to become acquainted with the great things which God hath written in his law and goſpel, but look upon them as vain and unprofitable—If, inſtead of reading in this book the words of Jehovah, and laying them up in your heart, you plead with a view to extenuate your ignorance, the want of time, and other frivolous excuſes, when your negligence proceeds in reality from want of inclination, and love to divine truths—If, notwithſtanding you have been informed of the ſin and danger of ignorance of the diſcoveries which God hath given of his will in the ſcriptures, you continue devoid of the knowledge

knowledge of the Moſt High, of his Son, and Spirit, and ſalvation,—if, inſtead of inſtructing your families, and thoſe entruſted to your care, according to the commandment, you ſuffer them, by neglect of your duty, to periſh, through ignorance of the things that belong to their peace and happineſs, by ſuch criminal conduct you pour contempt upon the grace of God, revealed in the goſpel, and the authority of his law. Though poſſeſſed of other accompliſhments and advantages, ſuch perſons are unworthy of the name and privileges of Chriſtians, and by eating and drinking unworthily in this ordinance, you would be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Thoſe too are debarred from the Lord's Supper who diſbelieve the word of God contained in the Old and New Teſtaments, and who do not give undoubted credit to the hiſtories, the doctrines, the precepts, the promiſes, and the threatenings contained in the Bible,—who believe not in the perfections and providence of God, in the omnipotence, grace, and faithfulneſs of the Saviour who came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt, and of their abſolute need of ſalvation by his blood,—who believe not in the Holy Ghoſt, the ſanctifier, guide, and comforter of the Church, and do not acknowledge the neceſſity of his renovating, directing, and ſtrengthening influence, to furniſh for every good work, and to prepare for the inheritance of the ſaints in light,—who are deſtitute of that precious faith which worketh by love to God and man, which purifies the

the heart from the love of ſin, which overcomes the world, and is accompanied with good works. Scepticiſm is the poiſonous root from which proceeds all manner of iniquity, that chokes the ſeed of the word of God, prevents it from ſpringing up, and bringing forth fruit unto life everlaſting. Without faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, or to perform to him any acceptable ſervice, and therefore be aſſured that our gracious Lord doth not invite you to his table.

Thoſe alſo are excluded from this holy ordinance, by Jeſus Chriſt, who are immoral in their conduct, and delight not in the law of the Lord,—who are lovers of the world and themſelves, more than of God who is bleſſed for ever,—who practically deny him that ſacred homage which is due to his eternal Majeſty and grandeur,—who do not acknowledge him as their Creator, preſerver, Saviour, and Lord,—who contemn and neglect the inſtitutions of his appointment, and worſhip not the great God in ſecret and public, in the ſpiritual acceptable manner he requires,—who, far from reverencing the great and dreadful name of the Lord our God, take it in vain, and pollute their converſation with abominable oaths and imprecations,—who, inſtead of ſanctifying the Sabbaths of the Lord, according to the commandment, profane them, by unneceſſary buſineſs, viſits, and amuſements,—who are negligent and unfaithful in performing thoſe relative and ſpecial duties, by the practice of which Chriſtians adorn their profeſſion, teſtify gratitude

and

and ſubjection to their Lord, and love to their brethren,—parents who bring not up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord,—children who are undutiful and diſobedient to their parents,—maſters who withhold that which is right and equal from their ſervants,—ſervants who do not conſcientiouſly perform the buſineſs aſſigned to them,—malicious, cruel, revengeful perſons, who deliberately injure their own lives, and the comfort of others,—lewd and unclean perſons, that, far from living in ſanctification and honour, indulge in voluptuouſneſs, debauchery, and forbidden impurities,—diſhoneſt people, who, inſtead of uſing lawful means to obtain a comfortable ſubſiſtence, ſquander away time in ſloth and idleneſs, and artfully endeavour to ſteal and defraud others of their property,—evil ſpeakers, who regard not integrity and truth, ſlanderouſly injure the reputation of their neighbours, equivocate, and falſify their promiſes, and fulfil not their engagements,—diſcontented, fretful people, who are diſſatisfied with the lot aſſigned them by Providence, repine at his diſpenſations, and envy the poſſeſſions and enjoyments of their neighbours. Perſons of the above deſcriptions, whilſt they continue in their preſent ſtate, cannot enjoy communion with Jeſus Chriſt, have no right to participate of his ſupper, and are therefore prohibited by him from coming to this ſpiritual feaſt. What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs, what communion hath light

light with darkneſs, what concord hath Chriſt with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? If, after this fair warning, this ſolemn prohibition, thoſe who are of the characters above mentioned, ſhall preſume to partake of the Lord's Supper, they, not we, are anſwerable for the conſequences. That you may ſee my authority for what I have ſaid, you may read 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

Leſt any may be diſcouraged from participating of this comfortable ordinance, for whom it is intended by the Maſter of aſſemblies, he graciouſly invites to it his upright faithful diſciples. Who, convinced of the malignity and danger of tranſgreſſion, and of the infinite mercy of God, in Chriſt, have turned unto the Lord, from the error of their ways, and experienced the ſalutary influence of true repentance, that eſſential ingredient in the ſalvation of Chriſt.—Who, placing their ſupreme happineſs in the favour of God, and communion with him, have unreſervedly conſecrated themſelves to his ſervice and obedience, and are obeying from the heart the form of ſound words delivered unto them,—who having cordially ſubmitted to Jeſus Chriſt, as their unerring inſtructor, to teach them by his word and Spirit, have learned from him to deny themſelves, to take up the croſs, and to follow his example, —who place entire dependence on him, as their great High Prieſt, to atone their guilt, and to plead their cauſe with God, to convey to them righteouſneſs and peace, grace and glory,

glory, with every good thing,—who confide in him as their rightful Sovereign, to ſubdue their corrupt paſſions, to defend them from enemies, and to govern them by his laws,—who having experienced the quickening transforming power of the Holy Spirit, are living by the faith of the Son of God, walking worthy of the Lord, unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and abounding in the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are, by Jeſus Chriſt, to the praiſe and glory of God. To you the invitation is directed. Come, for all things are now ready to gratify your enlarged holy deſires, and to yield you the higheſt ſatisfaction. This houſe is not only open for your reception, but this table is covered for your entertainment. Ample ſpiritual proviſion is to be ſet before you, a fountain is open for your purification and refreſhment. We, who are your ſervants for Jeſus ſake, are ready to give to every one his portion in due ſeaſon; we are juſt about to bleſs the ſacrifice, to requeſt the Maſter of the feaſt, who bids you welcome, to vouchſafe his gracious preſence, to command his bleſſing upon us, our fellowſhip, and our divine repaſt. Incline your ear then, and come and ſhew forth our Saviour's death; hear, and your ſoul ſhall live, and he will make an everlaſting covenant with you, and enrich you with the choiceſt bleſſings. May you receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of ſalvation. *Amen.*

THE

THE

CONSECRATION AND THANKSGIVING.

ALMIGHTY and moſt gracious God, who art clothed with honour and majeſty, who covereſt thyſelf with light, as with a garment, who art merciful and gracious, who art love, and dwelleſt in love; we, thy apoſtate ſinful creatures, approach thy ſacred preſence, through the mediation of thy beloved Son, lamenting our departure from thee, in whoſe favour there is life, and the innumerable tranſgreſſions we have committed againſt thee, our rightful Sovereign, and liberal Benefactor. Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, who daily loadeth us with his benefits—even the God of ſalvation, who, according to his abundant mercy, ſent into this world his only begotten Son, that we might live through him. We preſent before thee, the Father of mercies, and God of all grace, our united thankſgivings and praiſes, that when we had deſtroyed ourſelves, in thee we found help,—that when we were loſt, the Son of thy love came, in thy great name, to ſave us,—that when the redemption of our ſouls muſt have ceaſed for ever, he gave his life a ranſom for many. We celebrate, with gratitude, the praiſes of thy aſtoniſhing love, and the triumphs of thy victorious grace. We magnify and bleſs the compaſſionate Saviour of them who were ready to periſh, who vouchſafed to become a curſe for us, that divine bleſſings

bleſſings might flow to us in copious ſtreams. Bleſſed be the Lord, the Spirit, who applies to our ſouls the ſacrifice and ſalvation of Jeſus Chriſt, who forms us into his lovely image, renders us conform to the will of God, and makes meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. We thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, for the inſtitution of the holy Supper, the precious token of thy love to thy Church, the ſacred feaſt whereby the diſciples of thy Son are nouriſhed, invigorated, and comforted. We acknowledge ourſelves utterly unworthy of the honour of attending the marriage ſupper of the Lamb, and of a place among the children of the Higheſt. We therefore earneſtly requeſt, moſt merciful God, that thou wilt grant us the wedding garment; may the righteouſneſs which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, be upon us all; work in us thoſe devout affections and divine graces which are requiſite to a comfortable and acceptable participation of this bleſſed ordinance. Heavenly Father, grant alſo, we beſeech thee, that the bread which we bleſs, and that we are now to break, may be to us the communion of the body of Chriſt; and that the cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, may be to us the communion of the blood of Chriſt. May the reviving doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt dying on a croſs, to ſave ſinners, prove refreſhing and comforting to our minds,—may it be our ſtrength and our ſong, the ſource of our holineſs and conſolation. Fulfil, we pray thee, to us, Lord Jeſus, the precious promiſe thou

thou haſt given, that, after thy exaltation, thou wilt draw all men unto thee. Draw to thyſelf the carnal, the ſecure, the licentious; and teach them, through thy croſs, to crucify their luſts; draw to thyſelf the troubled, the anxious, and the timorous; encourage them by the attracting view of thy ſufferings, to hope and confidence in thee; draw nearer to thee thy genuine diſciples, embrace them in the arms of thy mercy, and vouchſafe to them increaſe in knowledge, grace, and holineſs. Eternal Spirit of all grace, enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Chriſt, and him crucified, —of Chriſt, and him glorified,—that we may have intimate experimental acquaintance with the fellowſhip of his ſufferings, with conformity to his death, and the power of his reſurrection. Almighty and moſt merciful God, water the precious ſeed of thy word, that hath been ſown this morning, with the dew of thy bleſſing; grant us, we entreat thee, thy gracious preſence—thy enriching benediction—thy direction and aſſiſtance;—fulfil in us the good pleaſure of thy goodneſs, and the work of faith with power, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, one living and true God, be everlaſting praiſe, honour, and glory. *Amen.*

ADDRESS

ADDRESS TO COMMUNICANTS.

In the Lord's Supper, to which we are now convened, the disciples of Jesus Christ are admitted to delightful communion with the most high God, who gives us the symbols of his presence, the instructions of his word, and the pledges of his love, whilst we are allowed to converse with him, by devout meditation, supplication, and thanksgiving. We enjoy improving fellowship with our Saviour and Lord, in his official characters and variegated conditions, as crucified for our sins, and glorified at the right hand of God, whilst he conveys to us the rich fruits of his mediation, we gratefully accept of them, and rejoice in his salvation. We experience pleasing intercourse with the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier and Comforter of the Church, who takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to us, imparts to us light and life, grace and strength, with the other inestimable benefits contained in the redemption of the Son of God, whilst we receive with humility, gratitude, and praise, the blessings he confers. We hold communion with the whole family of God, who are fellow subjects with us of the same Lord,—fellow-servants with us, of the same Master,—fellow-worshippers with us, of the same God; children of the same Father, and members of the same society, part of whom are employed in heavenly

heavenly places, celebrating the praiſes of Jehovah, and part of whom are endeavouring in earthly places to do the will of God, as the angels in heaven. What honour, what felicity, reſults from this ſublime exerciſe! That as brethren you may all partake of the ſame ſpiritual meat, and all drink of the ſame ſpiritual drink, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in the ſame night wherein he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, as we have eſſayed to do in his name, and after his example, he brake it, and gave it to the diſciples, ſaying, 'Take, eat; this is my body, which 'is broken for you: this do in remembrance 'of me.' He alſo took the cup, ſaying, 'This 'cup is the new teſtament in my blood, ſhed 'for many, for the remiſſion of ſins: Drink 'ye all of it.' Perform this ſacred ſervice with penitential ſorrow, in the recollection of the ſinful miſerable ſtate wherein we were involved, when the omnipotent Saviour appeared for our deliverance. Do this in ſolemn commemoration of that ineffable love which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth,—which induced him to appear in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh,—which conducted him to the manger, to the garden, to the croſs, and to the grave, that he might accompliſh our ſalvation. Do this in grateful remembrance of that incomparable grace he diſplayed in the indefatigable labours he ſuſtained, in the bitter cup which he drank, in the earneſt prayers and ſtrong cries which he uttered, in the extreme agony

agony that he felt, the wounds he received, and the excruciating death to which, on our account, he ſubmitted. Do this in thankful remembrance of the atoning ſacrifice which he offered up for us unto God, through the eternal ſpirit, the complete victory which he obtained for us, over our ſpiritual enemies, and the everlaſting redemption he acquired for us, by laying down his precious life. How generous, how beneficent, is the love of the Son of God that we commemorate! The bleſſings derived from it are incalculable in value and number. All that is neceſſary, all that is precious, all that is deſirable, flows from his tender compaſſion and kind interpoſition in our behalf. Deliverance from condemnation and wrath, reconciliation and peace with God, the Holy Spirit, to ſanctify, ſtrengthen and comfort, the protection of kind Providence, a preſent right with the future enjoyment of eternal felicity and glory. Such rich diſplays of unparalleled love are indeed worthy to be remembered throughout all generations.—God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, grant us clear views of the antiquity and freedom, the extent and glory of thy love. Whilſt we muſe on this delightful theme, do thou cauſe a reciprocal flame of love to burn in our hearts, until it conſume like ſtubble our corrupt paſſions, and purify all our powers, that henceforth they may be employed in thy ſervice.—Let the love of Chriſt conſtrain you to live not unto yourſelves, but unto him that died for you, and roſe again.

Expreſs

Expreſs your love to the Saviour, in grateful thankſgivings for his marvellous grace, in unreſerved obedience to his commands, in aſſiduous imitation of his example, in active exertions to advance his honour, in improving converſe with his diſciples, and in ardent deſires after the full enjoyment of his preſence in heaven. 'Now, the God of peace that 'brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, 'that great Shepherd of the ſheep, through 'the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make 'you perfect in every good work, to do his 'will, working in you that which is well-plea-'ſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to 'whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*'

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION FROM THE PULPIT.

THUS far a conſiderable number in this aſſembly have been employed in the moſt pleaſant and profitable ſervice in which we can be engaged on this ſide eternity. By the aſtoniſhing interpoſition of the Son of God, that we have been commemorating, the conſummate wiſdom, the infinite love, the immacu-

late holineſs, the perfect righteouſneſs of Jehovah, were illuſtriouſly diſplayed; the purity of the divine law, the malignity of ſin, were clearly demonſtrated; and the redemption of the Church was accompliſhed. In this great and chief ſubject of the glorious goſpel, the foundation of faith and hope, and peace with God, is diſcovered; the ſource of everlaſting conſolation, joy, and triumph, is diſcloſed; the moſt powerful motives to love and obedience to God are ſuggeſted, which can operate on the human heart. What employment then ſo grateful to the redeemed and renovated among men, who are capable of reliſhing the moſt ſublime ſpiritual pleaſures, as to contemplate the great myſtery of godlineſs which angels look into with admiration,—to enjoy the fruits of that loving kindneſs which is better than life,—to receive Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, with his promiſed good ſpirit,—to exult with a conqueror that fought our battles,—to feaſt with him and his friends on a rich entertainment,—to reap in joy what was ſown in tears,—and to obtain the earneſts of eternal ſalvation. From ſuch delightful exerciſes ariſe the moſt exquiſite pleaſures, which excite in the mind joy unſpeakable and full of glory, which put more gladneſs into the heart than when corn and wine increaſed.—The Lord's Supper is not leſs profitable than pleaſant. If you aſk what advantage reſults from it? I anſwer in the words of an apoſtle, on another occaſion, 'Much 'every way.' Doth not profit conſiſt in bettering

tering our circumſtances, and in improving our condition? Do not Chriſtians derive great benefit from this ordinance, whereby their ſpiritual ſtate is improved and confirmed, when attended with the divine preſence and bleſſing? There we call to our thankful remembrance the moſt magnificent and intereſting objects which are deſigned to ſubdue evil paſſions,—to excite good affections,—to ſtrengthen the graces of the Spirit,—to impart new vigour to our minds,—to furniſh us for all good works, and to be the mean of preparing for eternal glory. If we are feeble, and ready to faint, this divine repaſt is intended to renew our ſtrength, and to reſtore our ſouls, if we are in perplexity and dejection, this benevolent inſtitution is admirably ſuited to relieve from anxiety and depreſſion; if the ſpiritual life ſeems to languiſh and decay, here it may be quickened and invigorated. Of this ſacred pleaſure, of this ſubſtantial advantage, I hope that not a few in this houſe have this day had comfortable experience in ſhewing forth our Lord's death until he come. That through the bleſſing of God I may contribute to preſerve you in the enjoyment of the ſatisfaction you have felt, and the benefit you have reaped, I requeſt you to attend to your dignity, duty, and danger.

1. Conſider your dignity. I ſpeak not of the glory, honour, and dominion with which Jehovah crowned man, when he made him a

little lower than the angels, but of the diſtinguiſhed excellence and high rank to which, when in a depreſſed condition, he was pleaſed, in ſovereign grace, to elevate you who love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity. I call your attention to this ſubject, not to cheriſh emotions of pride and ſelf importance; for the manner of your elevation excludes high thoughts, and inculcates profound humility and ſelf denial. Recollect then—you are the ſervants of Almighty God; a character which the greateſt men that ever lived, have looked upon as their honour and happineſs. Acting with fidelity in this capacity, you are aſſured that your Maſter in heaven will grant you proviſion, aſſiſtance, and protection in his work, and an abundant recompenſe of reward, which is infinitely more than ſufficient to counterbalance all the riches, honours, and pleaſures of this world. You are the peculiar people of Jehovah, his choſen generation, his royal prieſthood, his holy nation, that he hath redeemed and purified unto himſelf, by the precious blood of his Son, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, that you may ſhew forth his virtues, and that by your good works, which men ſhall behold, they may glorify God in the day of viſitation. You are the children of the living God, that he hath adopted into his divine family, renewed after his amiable image, inveſted with the moſt glorious privileges, and conſtituted heirs of his everlaſting kingdom, and I truſt you are endeavouring to walk worthy of

your

your intimate relation to your heavenly Father. You are closely connected with Jesus Christ, the Lord of all; being so joined to him, as to be one spirit with him, you are members of his body the Church, temples wherein resides the Holy Ghost, who is promised to abide with you continually; to instruct and guide, to strengthen and comfort you. You are members of that large honourable society, which is composed of the excellent ones of the earth, who are chosen and called, and faithful, who are employed in the most sublime services our present condition can admit, over which Jesus Christ presides, of which angels are the guardians, and to which belong unsearchable riches. After all, the honours to which you are now advanced, are only preludes to your future elevation, when you shall be stationed around the throne of God, clothed with white robes, invested with crowns of glory, and palms of victory, to enjoy the presence, and to celebrate the praises of God and the Lamb. Such is the dignity of real Christians.

2. Attend to your duty. God doth not allow any of the members of his household to be indolent or idle; to every one he assigns his proper work; to all he saith, 'Occupy till I 'come; be diligent, be faithful, be stedfast, 'be strong in the Lord.' Impressed with a just sense of the supreme authority of God, and your manifold obligations to obey his

commands, which are holy, juſt, and good; endeavour to keep them with your whole hearts, and to acquit yourſelves as his good ſervants. Reverence his Majeſty, love his excellencies, confide in his providence and promiſes, worſhip him in the manner he requires, delight in him as your all ſufficient portion, be thankful for his mercies, acquieſce in his diſpenſations, and be followers of him as dear children.—Honour his beloved Son, hearken to his voice, believe and obey his word, imitate his example, rely on his mediation, keep his commandments, converſe with him in his ordinances, maintain fellowſhip with his diſciples, beware of grieving his Spirit, glory in his croſs, and rejoice in his ſalvation.—'Love 'your neighbours as yourſelves; be kindly, 'affectionate one to another, with brotherly 'love. Whatſoever you would that men 'ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them.' Do good to all, as ye have opportunity; eſpecially to them who are of the houſehold of faith. 'Love your enemies, bleſs them that 'curſe you; do good to them that hate you, 'and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, 'and perſecute you.'—Deny yourſelves, take up the croſs, and follow Jeſus Chriſt. Be humble and meek; be ſober, be vigilant, patient and reſigned; ſolicitous that the ſame mind be in you that was in Chriſt Jeſus, and that you walk as he alſo walked. 'We exhort 'and charge every one of you, as a father doth 'his children, that you would walk worthy of 'God,

'God, who hath called you to his kingdom and 'glory. Furthermore, we beſeech you, bre- 'thren, by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have re- 'ceived of us how ye ought to walk, and to 'pleaſe God, ſo ye would abound more and 'more.'

3. Recollect your danger. I mention this circumſtance not to excite alarm or deſpondency, but to put you on your guard, and to awaken to circumſpection and dependence on God our Saviour. I mean to warn you of the difficulties you may have to encounter, ariſing from the power and ſubtilty of your ſpiritual enemies, and the evils to which you may be expoſed in the courſe of your Chriſtian warfare. This friendly admonition is not inconſiſtent with that humble confidence in the divine mercy, and good hope, through grace, which the goſpel imparts to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus. The ſpiritual life is uniformly repreſented in Scripture, as requiring caution and vigilance, activity and diligence, in order to its preſervation and progreſs. Know then, brethren, that you are liable to manifold dangers. The enemies of your ſalvation are powerful and crafty. Your adverſary, the devil, will ſuit his temptations to your ſeveral weakneſſes, and the ſins that moſt eaſily beſet you; the world will preſent you with allurements adapted to win your affections, and wicked men will endeavour to ſeduce you into their pernicious company, whilſt your deceitful

hearts will be apt to take part with your external foes. Formality, lukewarmneſs, infidelity, and negligence, with many other evils, will be ready to encroach upon you, on every occaſion. Pride or preſumption, deſpondency or ſelf righteouſneſs, ſelf confidence or ſecurity, may inſenſibly ſteal upon you ere ever you are aware. 'Ye therefore beloved, ſeeing 'ye knew theſe things before, beware, leſt ye 'alſo, being led away with the error of the 'wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs. Look 'to yourſelves, that ye loſe not thoſe things 'which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a 'full reward.' Thanks be to God, though your condition be hazardous, it is not helpleſs. Though you be encompaſſed with dangers, though your warfare may be difficult, and your conflicts many and arduous, yet in this rejoice, 'the Lord is your refuge and ſtrength, and in 'ſtraits a preſent aid.' Greater is he that is in you, than all they that are or can be againſt you; ſo that you may boldly ſay, with the King of Iſrael, 'In God is my ſalvation and 'my glory, the rock of my ſtrength; and my 'refuge is in God. Yea, though I walk thro' 'the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear 'no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and 'thy ſtaff, they comfort me.'

I conclude, by addreſſing a few words to you who, notwithſtanding you live without God, and without Chriſt, in the avowed practice of known ſin, have participated of the Lord's

Lord's Supper, having neither the Maſter's invitation, nor the wedding garment. To you I ſay, 'Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?' How couldeſt thou preſume to go to the Lord's table, deſtitute of the garments of ſalvation, or expect to receive welcome, benefit, and acceptance? Did you intend, by taking a place among the friends of Jeſus Chriſt, to paſs yourſelves for his diſciples; whilſt you continue enemies to God, in your minds, and by wicked works? Though you may have ſucceeded in this deception, what availeth it you to have a name to live, whilſt you are dead; to have the form, deſtitute of the power of godlineſs? The awful day is faſt approaching, wherein the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed; wherein the hypocrite and the formaliſt, to their everlaſting confuſion, ſhall be diveſted of all their artful diſguiſes, and your real character, with that of every individual of mankind, ſhall be publicly known amidſt the aſſembled world. It is vain to plead that you did not know but you were the friends of the Son of God. You have the bible in your hands, which, if you carefully conſulted, and compared with it your temper and conduct, you might have aſcertained your true character. You know where you live, and what is your occupation, and yet, alas! you are ignorant whether you are children of God, or the children of this world; whether you are in the way to everlaſting happineſs, or miſery. 'Now is the accepted time, 'now is the day of ſalvation,' in which you

'ought to give all diligence, to make your cal-
'ling and election ſure. Draw nigh to God,
'and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanſe your
'hands, ye ſinners; and purify your hearts, ye
'double minded.' This is your preſent indiſ-
penſible duty. Approach to God with your whole hearts, in the exerciſe of unfeigned faith and prayer, and penitence, in the lively hope that he will viſit you with his ſalvation, and give you to ſee the good of his choſen. May he be pleaſed to vouchſafe you his favour and bleſſing. And to him, through Jeſus Chriſt, be honour and glory. *Amen.*

EVENING

EVENING SERMON.

SERMON VI.

THE PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

2 Cor. vi. 18.

And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

IT would indeed have been an act of marvellous condescension and grace, had the great God been pleased to restore any of those who are by nature children of wrath, to the enjoyment of his divine favour; but the honour promised in the words now read, is higher still, even that of being made sons and daughters to the Lord God omnipotent. The advancement of unworthy guilty creatures, such as we are, to this distinguished dignity and felicity, justly excites the admiration of celestial intelligences, and shall be the delight-

ful theme of the ardent praiſes of the ſaints through eternal ages. Every other relation to which we can be advanced, the moſt ſplendid titles to which we can aſpire, are trivial, not worthy to be compared to this glorious privilege. It exhibits a rich diſplay of the love of God, that paſſeth knowledge; it gives a pleaſing proof of the everlaſting faithfulneſs of Jehovah, whilſt it elevates choſen men, the favourites of heaven, to real excellence and grandeur, and the moſt tranſporting proſpects.

In the former part of this beautiful chapter, from which I have taken my text, the apoſtle of the Gentiles gives ſuch an eloquent, energetic deſcription of the labours and ſufferings he ſuſtained on account of the goſpel of Chriſt, as at once excites terror, compaſſion, and ſympathy. What wonderful elevation, what fervour, what repetitions, what ſurpriſing contraſts, what variety of figures doth he employ to repreſent the triumphs of Jeſus Chriſt, by the miniſtry of the word over the combined oppoſition, the pride, the malice of his enemies. What ſublime amplifications, what forcible expreſſions, what aſtoniſhing circumſtances, does he introduce, to illuſtrate this noble ſubject. In the latter part of the chapter, with ecſtatic vehemence and tender affection, he addreſſes a moſt pathetic exhortation to the ſaints, to abſtain from all improper connection with wicked men, which he enforces by the moſt powerful animating motives. Among other things, he aſſures them of enjoying the

the accompliſhment of the exceeding great and precious promiſes recorded in Scripture, that God will graciouſly receive them into his family; that he will be a Father to them, in conſequence of which they ſhall acquit themſelves as becometh his children.

In dependence on divine aid, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the import and excellence of the glorious privilege mentioned in the text, whereby a reciprocal endearing relation, and intimate correſpondence, is eſtabliſhed betwixt the Lord Almighty, and thoſe to whom the promiſe is verified.—He acknowledgeth that he is their Father, and demonſtrates his paternal love, by imparting to them his Holy Spirit; by making ample proviſion for the ſupply of their wants; by inſtructing them ſo as to make them wiſe unto ſalvation; by protecting them from the evils to which they are expoſed; by giving them ſeaſonable neceſſary correction; by admitting them to delightful intercourſe with him; and by conſtituting them heirs of his everlaſting kingdom.—In return they diſplay grateful filial affection to him, by honouring and obeying his authority; by imitating of his excellencies; by delighting in his preſence; by promoting his glory; and by relying on his paternal care.

To theſe particulars, which, through the divine bleſſing, may aſſiſt you in underſtanding the reviving aſſurance now to be conſidered, I requeſt your ſerious attention.

I. To discover the import and excellence of the glorious privilege mentioned in the text, whereby a reciprocal endearing relation and intimate correspondence is established betwixt the Lord God Omnipotent, and those to whom the promise is verified—consider that he acknowledgeth he is their Father, and demonstrates his paternal love.

1. By imparting to them his Holy Spirit. This rich donation, which demonstrates the love, the grace, the munificence and kindness of a Father, and which distinguishes them from the men of this world, God is pleased to confer upon all his children, and on them only. This precious gift, conveyed through the mediation of the beloved Son of God, is indispensibly requisite to purify our corrupt natures, to form us into the image of our heavenly Father, to produce an abiding principle of spiritual life, to qualify us for appearing in his house and family, and dwelling for ever in his presence. By this spirit of life, that proceeds from the Father, and flows to us from Christ Jesus, our understandings are illuminated, so that we are made light in the Lord, our vicious inclinations are subdued, and we become obedient children; our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God, our affections are elevated from things earthly and sensual, to spiritual and eternal objects. By the powerful agony of this sanctifying spirit, we are beautified with those divine graces, which are emphatically denominated his fruits; love, joy,

joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, temperance.

According to the riches of God's glory, we are ſtrengthened with might by his ſpirit in the inner man, he makes all grace to abound toward us, that we always having all-ſufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. He enables us to approach God as our Father, and to demean ourſelves as his children; he helps our infirmities in holy duties; he leads us unto the land of uprightneſs; he bears witneſs with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God; he ſeals us unto the day of redemption, and gives the earneſt of eternal inheritance. He makes all old things to paſs away, and all things to become new. The admirable plan, according to which we obtain this ineſtimable bleſſing, is clearly pointed out elſewhere by our apoſtle, in theſe words: 'When the fulneſs of time was come, God 'ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made 'under the law, to redeem them that were 'under the law, that we might receive the a'doption of ſons. And becauſe ye are ſons, 'God hath ſent forth the ſpirit of his Son into 'your hearts.' What miracles of mercy to procure for us, and to inveſt us with the character and ſpirit of children of God. Recount them with admiration; the miſſion, the incarnation, the humiliation, the obedience and ranſom of God's dear Son. How glorious the privilege, how great the honour, how exquiſite the felicity, how ennobling the principle of the

ſpirit

ſpirit of God, whereby an entire change is made, not only in our condition, but in our diſpoſitions and practices.

2. By making ample proviſion for the ſupply of their neceſſities. Innumerable are the temporal wants of the children of God, which, with unbounded liberality, our heavenly Father ſeaſonably relieves. He gives the luminaries of heaven to enlighten and warm our habitation, and rain from heaven with fruitful ſeaſons. 'He cauſeth the herb and the corn to grow 'for the ſervice of man, that he may bring forth 'food out of the earth, and wine that maketh 'glad the heart of man, oil to make his face 'to ſhine, and bread that ſtrengtheneth man's 'heart.' Ever mindful of us, and perfectly acquaint with all our various circumſtances, we may be aſſured that he will not with-hold any thing neceſſary to our ſupport. With great propriety doth our bleſſed Saviour, by the moſt convincing arguments, diſſuade us from anxious concern about temporal good things. 'Take no thought, therefore, ſaying, what 'ſhall ye eat, or what ſhall ye drink, or where-'withal ſhall ye be clothed, for your heaven-'ly Father knoweth that ye have need of all 'theſe things. Seek ye firſt the kingdom of 'God and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things 'ſhall be added unto you.' In proof of God's gracious regard to the temporal intereſts of his children, I might appeal to the hiſtory of Iſrael, who were anciently honoured with the deſignation of his ſons, but I rather call upon you

to

to recollect your own experience. Say ye, children of the Moſt High, Did the Lord God ever fail to afford you every needful ſupport; have you not reaſon to acknowledge, with the apoſtle Peter, his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godlineſs? Though ſome may be in mean and ſtraitened circumſtances, 'He who is faithful hath promi-'ſed, that bread ſhall be given you, and your 'water ſhall be ſure.' He may not, perhaps, feed you with the fineſt of the wheat, but he will always give the food moſt convenient for you.

And doth your God and Father thus take care of your periſhing bodies, and will he not much more provide for your immortal ſouls, which he hath redeemed with the precious blood of Chriſt, and quickened by his ſpirit that dwelleth in you. To all his renovated family he gives the bread and the water of life, whereby they are nouriſhed and ſtrengthened, and grow up unto perfect men, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. To babes in Chriſt he aſſigns the ſincere, the rational milk of the word, that thereby they may grow in grace, in knowle-lge, in holineſs and comfort. To thoſe who are farther advanced in the divine life, and who, by reaſon of uſe, have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil, he diſtributes the word of righteouſneſs for the eſtabliſhment of their faith, the direction of their conduct, and their conſolation in diſtreſs. In few words, our Father

in

in heaven furniſhes all the members of his houſehold of faith with ſpiritual proviſion, ſuited to their circumſtances, ages, and capacities. In his houſe there is always bread enough and to ſpare; he keeps a plentiful table furniſhed with the beſt entertainment, whereby the ſouls of his children are ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs, and they are induced to praiſe him with joyful lips. What he generouſly beſtows, they thankfully receive, and highly eſteem, expreſſing in ſuch language as this, the pleaſure and gratitude which they feel. 'Thy words 'were found, and I did eat them; thy word 'was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of 'mine heart. More to be deſired are they 'than gold; yea, than much fine gold, ſweeter alſo than honey and the honey-comb. I 'have eſteemed the words of thy mouth more 'than my neceſſary food.'

3dly, By inſtructing them ſo as to make them wiſe unto ſalvation. Our heavenly Father is not only a liberal provider, but an incomparable teacher. Who teacheth like him? We challenge the whole univerſe to produce one who can ſo effectually inſtruct the ignorant, as the Lord God Almighty. He conveys not only all the knowledge which we acquire by the light of nature, from the works of his hands and the operations of his providence, but all the information contained in the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, reſpecting what we are to believe concerning him, and what duty he requires from us. In theſe ſacred oracles

cles he hath recorded, for our inſtruction, the hiſtory of the moſt illuſtrious characters and events; he hath communicated the moſt important diſcoveries; he hath given the moſt ſolemn admonitions; and the moſt excellent precepts, enforced by the moſt powerful motives. In this inſpired volume God hath given the moſt amiable repreſentations of his tender mercy and wonderful love to the ſons of men involved in ſin, guilt, and miſery; and to excite to compliance with his bleſſed will, he alarms our fears and encourages our hopes. And throughout the whole of divine revelation, he accommodates his inſtructions to our feeble capacities, to our various tempers, to our judgments, conſciences, and paſſions.

Notwithſtanding theſe plain and uſeful leſſons, which are tranſcribed into a language with which we are well acquainted, notwithſtanding they are put into our hands, that we may read therein all the days of our life, and they are read and explained in the churches every ſabbath-day; how lamentably ignorant are multitudes! how averſe to improve and apply what they know! To remove the natural perverſity, prejudices, and incapacity of his children to learn his holy word, our heavenly Father does what no other teacher can do. he opens the eyes of our underſtandings, to behold wondrous things out of his law. He gives us the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation, whereby we are enabled to diſcern the excellence, the importance, the ſuitableneſs of divine truths,

and

and to know the things that are freely given us of God. He effectually convinces of our ignorance and folly, and diſpoſes us to receive with meekneſs, the engrafted word which is able to ſave our ſouls. When this infinitely wiſe Teacher inſtructs, he cauſes us to profit, he makes to know wiſdom, and renders wiſe unto ſalvation. In this manner, according to ancient prophecy, all the children of God are taught of the Lord. Every one, therefore, who hath thus heard and learned of the Father, cometh to Jeſus Chriſt, truſteth in him for pardon of ſin, acceptance with God and eternal life, and obeyeth from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto us. What thanks can we render to our heavenly Father for the exceeding riches of his grace, diſplayed in leading us to the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the truth.

4thly, By preſerving them from the evils to which they are expoſed. Manifold are the dangers and calamities to which the children of God are liable in this preſent evil world, whereby our temporal or ſpiritual intereſts may be greatly injured. Such is the malice, the ſubtilty, and ſtrength of our enemies; ſuch is our own weakneſs, and our continual obnoxiouſneſs to evils of every kind, that nothing leſs than omnipotence can afford us all neceſſary protection and defence. When paſſing thro' this inhoſpitable region, overſpread with the ſhadow of death, where are deaths often, and where death hath reigned over mankind ſince the

the days of Adam, the Lord preſerveth our lives from deſtruction, he defends from hurtful accidents, from diſeaſe and diſſolution. Whilſt he hath any work for us here, he will keep and uphold us, and we ſhall be bleſſed on the earth.—In a ſpecial manner doth he preſerve our ſouls from ſpiritual evils, whereby they might be endangered and loſt. For this purpoſe he maintains and cheriſhes his fear in our hearts, which prompts to depart from evil, he ſtrengthens faith in his preſence providence and protection; he ſuppreſſes deſponding thoughts, and by his peace, that paſſeth all underſtanding, he keeps our hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus. He excites to humility, prayer, and vigilance againſt pride, covetouſneſs, voluptuouſneſs, and hypocriſy; he weakens corruption; he withdraws temptation, and gives a growing deteſtation of whatever might prove an occaſion of offending him. He enables to entertain the pleaſing hope expreſſed by the apoſtle Paul, in theſe words: 'The 'Lord will deliver me from every evil work, 'and preſerve me to his heavenly kingdom.' He not only reſcues from impending danger, but delivers from evil works which diſpleaſe him, deface his image, forfeit communion with him, which diſturb and defile the ſoul.—Indeed no real evil can befal the children of God, who have an almighty parent and watchful guardian for their conſtant protector. He gives his angels, whom he ſends forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation, charge concerning

ing them, and they encamp round about them that fear him. He keeps by his mighty power, through faith unto ſalvation; he hides, under the ſhadow of his wings, he keeps them even as the apple of his eye. 'I will ſay of the Lord, 'he is my refuge and my fortreſs; my God, 'in him will I truſt.'

5thly, By giving them neceſſary, ſeaſonable correction. Proper chaſtiſement, always adminiſtered with wiſdom and prudence, for the moſt benevolent purpoſes, I put down without heſitation, among the ſalutary proofs of our heavenly Father's paternal affection, and place it among the ſubſtantial benefits he confers upon his children. During our reſidence here on earth, we are only in our minority, we know but in part, and are apt to be inattentive to our beſt intereſts, and the important uſeful leſſons to which we ought diligently to apply our minds. We are prone to go aſtray from God, and through the inſinuating influence of temptation and bad example, to become negligent, formal, careleſs. Every one then may be ſenſible, that the diſcipline of the rod muſt be of conſiderable conſequence in the ſchool of Jeſus Chriſt. Chaſtiſements indeed muſt be acknowledged not joyous, but grievous. Perſonal afflictions, domeſtic troubles, and the loſs of friends and property, are for the preſent uneaſy and painful. In ſuch ſeaſons eſpecially, we ought to remember the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto us as unto the children, 'My ſon, diſpiſe not the chaſtening of the 'Lord,

'Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of 'him.' Beware of inſenſibility; beware of dejection; for whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth. Notwithſtanding he loves, he corrects, yea, he corrects, becauſe he loves; and thus performs the part of a good parent, who trains up his children by wholeſome diſcipline, to unreſerved ſubmiſſion and obedience. In every chaſtiſement God deſigns to promote our real benefit and improvement, which ought to reconcile our minds to every afflictive diſpenſation. Our heavenly Father corrects his children—to check the levity of our minds, to render us teachable and conſiderate, that we may receive inſtruction, be wiſe and forget it not. —To embitter ſin, and bring us to a penitent ſenſe of our tranſgreſſions.—To reclaim us from our backſlidings, and to excite to the more diligent and faithful performance of duty.—To detach our hearts from the tranſitory enjoyments of this uncertain world.—To exerciſe and improve our graces, ſuch as patience, confidence in God, and reſignation to his will. And all theſe afflictions, which through the divine co-operation and bleſſing, produce this happy temper of mind, this improved courſe of conduct, are under the direction of conſummate wiſdom, whereby they are admirably adjuſted with reſpect to time, meaſure, and continuance. They are all under his management who is merciful and gracious, who in wonderful condeſcenſion declares, that ſuch are his tender compaſſions, that in all our afflictions

flictions he is afflicted, that as a Father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him. I conclude this article in the words of the man according to God's own heart, 'Bleſ-'ſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O 'Lord.'

6thly, By admitting them to delightful intercourſe with him, God teſtifies his gracious regard and paternal affection for his regenerated children. Such is his infinite Majeſty and grandeur, ſuch our natural depravity and guilt into which ſin hath plunged us, that the intimate converſe which once ſubſiſted betwixt God and man, hath been lamentably interrupted. Though our hearts are eſtranged from him, and averſe to appear in his preſence, yet ſuch is the riches of his glorious grace and kindneſs toward us through Jeſus Chriſt, that he hath opened a new and living way, by which we are allowed to come into his preſence with filial reverence and confidence. Allowed, did I ſay? I might have ſaid invited, encouraged, and aſſured of hearty welcome and favourable acceptance. What a privilege, what honour, what happineſs, are they advanced to whom God hath predeſtinated unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt unto himſelf. God having become our Father, and ſent the ſpirit of his Son into our hearts, every ground of dread and terror is removed, and we are admitted to unboſom ourſelves to our beſt friend. With the moſt agreeable familiarity we lay before him our temptations and conflicts, our doubts

doubts and fears, our deſires and hopes, and keep back nothing from him, ſaying, with the royal Pſalmiſt, 'we declared our ways, and thou 'heardſt us.' What a mercy and comfort to have acceſs to God, not clothed with the ſtern character of a judge, but with the amiable compaſſions of a Father; and that not with the ſpirit of fear but of love; to ſtand not before the tribunal of judgment but the throne of grace! How deſirable, how grateful, to have our perſons and ſervices accepted in the beloved; to obtain mercy to pardon our ſins, to heal our diſtempers and relieve our miſeries; and grace to help our infirmities and ſupply our wants! And though our heavenly Father may ſometimes ſtand afar off, or behind a vail, yet when the diſtance is removed and the vail taken away, when he allows us to come even to his ſeat, and he appears in the tranſcendent glories of his Majeſty and mercy, we ſay with the devout King of Iſrael, 'Bleſſed is the man 'whom thou, O Lord, chooſeſt and cauſeſt to 'approach unto thee—we ſhall be ſatisfied with 'the goodneſs of thy houſe.'

Laſtly, By conſtituting them heirs of his everlaſting kingdom. Hearken to the apoſtle Paul's reaſoning on this ſubject, 'If children, 'then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with 'Chriſt.' And again, 'if a Son, then an heir of God through Chriſt.' This is not a precarious or doubtful matter, but is ſettled and ſecured to all the children of the Moſt High by an irrevocable deed and grant, confirmed and ratified

by the oath of Jehovah. For God, willing to ſhew more abundantly unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his counſel confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impoſſible for God to lie, 'we 'might have ſtrong conſolation who have fled 'for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before 'us.' Of this inheritance the faithful and true witneſs hath given you the moſt explicit aſſurance in the following words: 'Fear not, 'little flock, for it is your Father's good plea-'ſure to give you the kingdom.'—The kingdom prepared for you ſince the foundation of the world, obtained for you by Chriſt Jeſus in the fulneſs of time, and reſerved for you in heaven until the final judgment, when, after having been made meet for it by the Spirit of all grace, and the almighty power of the Son of God, you ſhall be admitted to full everlaſting poſſeſſion. Stretch then your thoughts beyond this uncertain periſhing world, beyond the gloomy regions of death and the grave, beyond the narrow limits of time, to that glorious triumphant ſtate, that ſplendid, magnificent kingdom, where, free from ſin, darkneſs, diſcord and death, and refined from all imperfection, you ſhall enter the realms of light, and love, and peace, to contemplate the perfection of beauty, and to enjoy undiſturbed eternal felicity. In this bleſſed heart-reviving proſpect, adopt the exulting language of the inſpired writers, 'The Lord is the portion of mine in-'heritance. Now are we the Sons of God, but

'it

'it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but 'we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall 'be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is!' —Thus have I laid before you ſome of the glorious privileges which God confers upon his children.

That you may have a clear and full view of the reciprocal indearing relation, and intimate correſpondence eſtabliſhed betwixt the Lord God Almighty and thoſe to whom the promiſe in my text is verified, permit me to inculcate upon his ſons and daughters, the returns of duty and gratitude which he juſtly demands, and which you are under the ſtrongeſt obligations faithfully to perform.—Teſtify your filial affection for your heavenly Father,

1ſt, By honouring him and obeying his authority. This is the firſt duty required of children to their earthly parents, the firſt commandment with promiſe. This becoming acknowledgement of his ſupreme excellence and righteous dominion he juſtly claims and expects. 'A ſon honoureth his father, and a ſer-'vant his maſter, if then I be a father, where is 'my honour? and if I be a maſter, where is my fear?' What a ſharp reproof did God adminiſter by the prophet Jeremiah to Iſrael who was called his ſon, and who ſaid unto the Lord, 'Thou 'art my father. Behold, ſaid he, thou haſt ſpo-'ken and done evil things as thou couldeſt.'—Cheriſh in your minds the higheſt veneration of his tranſcendent excellencies which render him infinitely worthy of your higheſt eſteem.

Contemplate him as the centre and ſource of life, perfection, and felicity, poſſeſſing incomparable beauty and glory, richly diſplayed in the works of creation, providence, and grace. Recollect the innumerable benefits he hath conferred upon you, the ineſtimable privileges you enjoy, and the tranſporting proſpects he hath opened to your view, until you feel your hearts filled with adoring wonder and admiring gratitude to him who formed you for himſelf, that you may ſhew forth his praiſes. Wherefore, as obedient children, faſhion not yourſelves according to the former luſts in your ignorance. Seeing you are admitted into the family of ſo great and ſo good a Parent of all his children, you ought to be moſt obedient and ſubmiſſive to the will of your Father in heaven. Take therefore good heed unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your God—that ye walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice and ſerve him, and cleave unto him. And let your obedience be prompt and liberal, unfeigned, impartial, and perſevering confident that he will not require any thing of you but what ſhall conduce to your benefit and his glory.

2. By imitating his excellencies. In the words of the apoſtle Paul, 'be ye therefore fol-'lowers, or imitators of God as dear children.' Study to reſemble him in his diffuſive goodneſs who is good unto all, and whoſe tender mercies are over all his works. Attend to the benevolent

nevolent command of Jesus Christ, who saith unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that 'curse you, do good to them that hate you, 'and pray for them that despitefully use you, 'and persecute you; that ye may be the chil-'dren of your Father who is in heaven, 'for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil 'and on the good, and sendeth rain, on the 'just and on the unjust.'—Imitate him in his tender mercy. 'He is the Lord God, mer-'ciful and gracious, who delights in exercising 'loving kindness, righteousness, and mercy on 'the earth;' and will you who are his children be hard-hearted, revengeful and unwilling to forgive those who offend you? How unsuitable is this odious temper to the sons and daughters of such a gracious compassionate Father who freely forgave you all trespasses! 'Where-'fore be ye kind one to another, forgiving one 'another, as God for Christ's sake hath for-'given you.'—Endeavour to copy after his untainted veracity who is the God of truth, who is delighted with truth in the inward parts, and who hath shewn inviolable faithfulness in accomplishing his word. A heathen Philosopher being asked what rendered men like to God, answered, 'speaking the truth.' Be faithful in performing your engagements to God, and punctual in fulfilling your promises to men; carefully avoid all manner of dissimulation and extravagance, in speech, and walk before God in truth and uprightness. —Once more, make it your business to resem-

ble God in his ſpotleſs holineſs. Law and goſpel unite in inculcating this important leſſon, 'As he who hath called you is holy, ſo be ye 'holy in all manner of converſation, becauſe it 'is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.' By this conformity and likeneſs to God you muſt ſhew that you are his children, that you bear his image and do his will.

3. By delighting in his preſence. Though at all times and in all places we are under the immediate inſpection of the great God, yet there are ſome ſeaſons and ſome places wherein his children are encouraged to expect his peculiar gracious preſence, and the moſt deſirable manifeſtations of his glory—wherein he appears eminently in the beauty of his holineſs, diſplaying the riches of his grace and love, the wonders of his wiſdom and power, the majeſty of his government, the miracles of his providence, the purity of his precepts, the terrors of his threatenings, and the excellence of his promiſes. In ſuch ſeaſons he is preſent to hear our ſupplications, to accept our praiſes, to commune with us, to grant us the fruits of his loving kindneſs, with every bleſſing. Shall we not then delight in coming into the preſence of our heavenly Father? He ſpeaks to us by his word and by the miniſtry of his ſervants; and ſhall not we liſten with the utmoſt attention when God vouchſafes to ſpeak to us? We addreſs him in prayer, wherein he allows us to make known to him all our wants; and ſhall not we engage with pleaſure in this honourable

nourable advantageous exercise? Love then the habitation of your Father's house, the place where his honour dwelleth, and where he manifests his glory. Diligently attend to his holy word, meditate therein day and night, and earnestly intreat that it may be accompanied to you with the Holy Spirit and with power. Wait upon God in the instituted ordinances of the gospel where his power is felt, and his glory is seen with such ardent devout breathings of soul as are beautifully expressed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel: 'O God, thou art 'my God, early will I seek thee; my soul 'thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee 'the living God; when shall I come and appear 'before God? Delight thyself in the Lord, and 'he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'

4. By promoting his glory, you must evidence your intimate relation to God, and your active concern for his honour and interest. Though God is glorified by all his creatures which display his divine excellencies, yet he is magnified in a peculiar manner by his regenerated children, whose very existence is to the praise of his glorious grace. Though you were silent and inactive, the new Creation shews forth the praises of its Creator. You are, however, indispensibly required, that whatever you do, to do all to the glory of God; 'that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.' For this purpose, with cordial affection, with unshaken confidence in the power of divine grace, and heartfelt pleasure, endeavour to advance

the honour and glory of God your Saviour, with whom you are intimately connected. Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and be induced not to admire and extol you, but to glorify your Father who is in heaven. Do what lies in your power that God may be known and loved and ſerved in this world, that his name may be declared in all the earth, that his kingdom of grace may be enlarged, that his ſalvation and ſaving health may extend to all nations throughout all generations. In all your actions, civil and ſacred, in every condition, whether proſperous or adverſe, be it your chief concern to promote the honour of your Father, and the intereſts of your Father's houſe, 'Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, do all 'things without murmurings and diſputings, 'that ye may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the 'ſons of God without rebuke in the midſt of 'a crooked and perverſe nation, among whom 'ye ſhine as lights in the world, holding forth 'the word of life.' Let all your buſineſſes be begun, carried on, and ended with God; let his love be the principle, his word the rule, his honour, approbation and enjoyment, the great objects you ſteadily keep in view.

5. By relying on his paternal care who is your Almighty Father and beſt friend. This advice we ſee daily exemplified in the world around us. Children who neither can, nor care to do any thing for themſelves, live quite eaſy by an unſuſpecting confidence in their parents, who

who never fail to make competent proviſion for them according to their abilities. This expreſſion of filial duty I warmly recommend to your practical regard who are the children of God. To you I addreſs the exhortation of the apoſtle Peter, 'Caſt all your care upon your 'Father in heaven, for he careth for you.' Firmly perſuaded that all events are under his direction, and that all your intereſts are continually in his hand, renounce confidence in the creature, and place unſuſpecting dependence on his wiſdom and goodneſs. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God. Truſt all your concerns, temporal and ſpiritual, to his diſpoſal, ſaying, with David the Son of Jeſſe, when in trying circumſtances, 'Behold 'here am I, let him do unto me as ſeemeth 'good unto him.' Confide in him daily for his Holy Spirit to ſanctify you wholly, to furniſh you for every good work, to comfort you under all the troubles of this life, and to prepare you for eternal life and glory. Let your experience in times paſt of his goodneſs and mercy, engage you henceforth to exerciſe conſtant dependence upon him for every thing neceſſary to your preſent welfare and eternal ſalvation, that it may ſeaſonably be conferred upon you through the infinite merits and prevalent interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt. This gracious temper gives the true enjoyment of life,

it not only brings liberty, but it gives reſt to the mind.

Thus have I ſet before you the import and excellence of the glorious privilege mentioned in my text, whereby the Lord God Almighty diſplays his paternal love toward thoſe to whom the promiſe in my text is verified; whilſt they, in return, deeply impreſſed with their infinite obligations, demonſtrate their grateful filial affection to him, who vouchſafes to become their friend and father. The thankful acceptance of the benefits contained in his promiſes, qualifies for the performance of the duties required in his precepts.

From the review we have taken of this extenſive ſubject, we are furniſhed with a deciſive teſt, whereby we may judge whether or not we are the renewed adopted children of God, whereby we may aſcertain our claim to the diſtinguiſhing bleſſings they enjoy.—Permit me, then, to requeſt your attention to a few plain queſtions, which, I pray God may powerfully impreſs upon your hearts, that every one of you that doth righteouſneſs may know he is born of God, and that whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs may be ſenſible he is not of God, neither hath known him.—Do you really think it poſſible that any perſon can belong to the divine family of God, and not honour and obey him—not imitate his excellencies—not delight in his preſence—not advance his glory—and not rely on his paternal care? Do you ſuppoſe that, by an oppoſite conduct, you can approve your-

yourſelves to be his ſons and daughters, and that you will boldly defend ſuch behaviour in the proſpect of death, and before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt? What can be more unfair than for you to pretend to be what in truth you are not? You call yourſelves Chriſtians and children of God, and yet you will not ſtudy the ſerious practice of your own profeſſion, nor live under the influence of thoſe very principles you profeſs to believe. How fooliſh, how inconſiſtent your character, how odious, how fatal the conſequences with which an obſtinate continuance in it muſt neceſſarily be attended! How deteſtible, how diſgraceful the appearance you make, by holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs. Conſider, ſinners, while there is yet hope, your deplorable and dangerous ſtate, and earneſtly beg of God, who is rich in mercy, that, for Chriſt's ſake, he will receive you into his family, ſanctify you by his Spirit, and admit you into the kingdom of his dear Son, to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

MORNING

MORNING SERMON.

SERMON VII*.

DEDICATION TO THE SERVICE OF GOD EXPLAINED AND URGED.

1 CHRON. xxix. 5.

Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

THESE words were ſpoken by the king of Iſrael on a very memorable occaſion. That illuſtrious monarch, about to reſign his throne and kingdom to his ſon Solomon, convened the chief eſtates of the empire, and a general aſſembly of his mighty men, to whom he delivered a warm and pathetic addreſs. In this animated ſpeech, he acquainted them of the intention he had formed of building a houſe for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the vaſt preparations he had made for erecting a moſt magnificent temple to the honour of Jehovah. He exhorted them in the moſt

* This Sermon was preached at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

moſt fervent, ſolemn manner, ſtedfaſtly to adhere to the worſhip of the true God, and the obedience of his commands. He gave ſalutary advice to the young prince, his ſucceſſor; he delivered to him the plan of the houſe, which he had by the Spirit of the Lord, and furniſhed him with materials to a very large amount, for erecting that coſtly and ſuperb edifice.—Embracing the favourable opportunity afforded by this convocation, he invited and encouraged his people to follow his laudable example, and liberally to contribute their aſſiſtance in promoting the noble deſign which had occupied his mind. After mentioning the valuable articles which he had collected, he calls for the aid of their individual exertions, with an ardour ſcarcely ever equalled by any ſovereign arrived at ſuch a good old age as he had attained.

Though we, my brethren, are not invited, like the Iſraelitiſh nation, to offer toward building a material temple for Jehovah, yet it is incumbent on every one of us to devote his beſt ſervices to the Lord our God, to do what lies in our power to prepare for him a ſpiritual temple, to maintain his worſhip, to advance his honour, and to teſtify our profound reſpect to his ſacred authority.—Under this impreſſion, and to promote this valuable purpoſe, I have read, as the ſubject of diſcourſe, theſe animating words of David the ſervant of the Lord, 'Who then is willing to 'conſecrate his ſervice this day unto the Lord?

—I

—I ſhall take occaſion from them, in dependence upon God, 1ſt, To ſhew what is implied in the voluntary conſecration of our ſervice to the Lord. And then, 2dly, To recommend the practice of this important duty.

Do thou, O Lord, who turneſt the hearts of men whitherſoever thou wilt in the day of thy power, make this people willing to offer their ſervice to thee; that they may henceforth be employed in doing thy will, and may ſerve thee in holineſs and righteouſneſs to the glory of thy name through Jeſus Chriſt.

1ſt. I begin with ſhewing what is implied in the voluntary conſecration of our ſervice to the Lord.

The import of this duty we may learn, in ſome meaſure, from the various expreſſions uſed in ſcripture to denote what is here intended, though ſomewhat different, they are in ſubſtance the ſame. In reference to the competition made for our ſubjection by other lords beſide the only true God, it is emphatically ſpoken of as a choice. When Joſhua gathered all the tribes and elders of Iſrael, that he might renew the covenant between God and the people, he thus addreſſes them: 'Chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve.' To this demand, they replied, 'We will ſerve the Lord.' In reſpect to the equity of the claim which God hath upon us for our beſt ſervices, he requires us to give ourſelves to him, and to offer him thoſe ſpiritual ſacrifices which are acceptable through Chriſt Jeſus. 'I beſeech you, brethren,

'ren (ſaith the apoſtle of the Gentiles) by the 'mercies of God, that ye preſent your bodies 'a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, 'which is your reaſonable ſervice.' To repreſent the ſolemnity and importance of this tranſaction, it is called a purpoſe, a vow, or an oath, whereby we engage to cleave unto the Lord with our whole hearts. The patriarch Jacob vowed to almighty God; and the children of Iſrael, in the days of good Nehemiah, entered into an oath to walk in God's laws. To intimate the happy conſequences reſulting from this duty, it is deſcribed by entering into covenant with God, whereby he becomes our God, and taketh us for his peculiar people. With this view Moſes reminded the Iſraelites, 'thou haſt avouched the Lord this day to be thy 'God, and to walk in his ways, and the Lord 'hath avouched thee to be his peculiar people, 'to make thee high above all nations in praiſe, 'in name, and in honour.' In my text, we are invited to conſecrate our ſervice unto the Lord, i. e. to offer and ſet it apart to his glory. Under the Old Teſtament, the Lord God expreſsly required, that all the poſterity of Iſrael ſhould be devoted to his ſervice, and that the firſt born among them ſhould be dedicated to him; that the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron ſhould be appropriated to the ſacred offices of the ſanctuary. Now, under the New Teſtament, all the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus are ſolemnly conſecrated to the Lord, to be a choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a peculiar

peculiar people; that they may ſhew forth the praiſes of him who hath called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. Would you then willingly devote yourſelves to the Lord, chooſe him for your maſter, offer him your beſt ſervices, vow unto him perpetual fidelity, enter into covenant with him that you may enjoy the diſtinguiſhing privileges of his ſervants, and yield prompt obedience to his authority. More particularly, this devout exerciſe implies —a heart-felt conviction that God hath an indubitable claim to our homage and ſubjection —a cheerful ſurrender of all our powers and faculties to be employed in executing his pleaſure—the lively contemplation of thoſe amiable characters in which he is repreſented in ſcripture—and, that this dedication be performed in a ſolemn manner, ſuited to the high importance of the tranſaction.

1. The voluntary conſecration of our ſervice to the Lord muſt proceed from a heart-felt conviction that he hath an unqueſtionable claim to our homage and ſubjection, whether we comply with his demand, or continue averſe from his obedience. The Lord, my brethren, is the ſupreme rightful Proprietor of the univerſe, of the world, and all that it contains, of the heavens, with all their hoſts, the ſea, with its fulneſs, the earth, with all its inhabitants, the lands, with their fruits, the cattle that paſture on a thouſand hills, the gold and the ſilver that are lodged in their bowels. All belong unto the Lord, who claims a ſpecial property in the

ſouls,

ſouls, the bodies, and active ſervices of men. This title, founded upon his creating and upholding power, which gave exiſtence to all the creatures, and ſtill preſerves them in being, gives him abſolute right to demand the poſſeſſion, the diſpoſal, and ſervice of thoſe whom he hath formed for his glory. He made us, and not we ourſelves; we are his people and the ſheep of his paſture, and therefore are invited to bow down before the Lord our Maker this day to hearken to his voice, and to ſerve him with gladneſs. This becoming acknowledgment was publicly made by the Iſraelitiſh monarch, in the 11th verſe of the chapter from which I have taken my text, where, in his ſolemn thankſgiving before all the congregation, he uttered theſe remarkable words, 'All 'that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine, 'O Lord.' But this is not all; the right which God hath to our ſervice, ariſes from the eternal redemption he hath obtained for us. After we had ſold ourſelves for nought into the hands of our enemies, and had incurred the divine diſpleaſure, God was graciouſly pleaſed, in his great love and tender compaſſion, to reſcue us from that deplorable condition, not with ſuch corruptible things as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might accompliſh our deliverance from ſin and miſery, and reſtoration to holineſs and happineſs. And this day, in the miniſtry of the goſpel, he thus addreſſes you, 'Who is willing to conſecrate his ſervice

unto

'unto the Lord?' Convinced that you belong to him, not only in the extenſive ſenſe which includes every creature, even thoſe who, thro' incapacity or malignity of nature, cannot realize his right, but that you are his ſpecial property, which he graciouſly regards—unreſervedly dedicate your ſervice to him, that you may be his peculiar treaſure, the objects of his diſtinguiſhing love and care, and be acknowledged by him as his ſervants in the day he maketh up his jewels. By complying with his requiſition, you humbly recognize his unalienable right to rule over you, and heartily conſent to the juſt demand that he makes of unlimited obedience and ſubmiſſion to his mild adminiſtration.

2. In this ſolemn tranſaction, devote all your powers and faculties to him who gave them; that they may henceforth be employed in doing him homage. The heart he principally regards and demands. Yield up then your underſtandings to be illuminated by his word and Spirit, and enriched with the knowledge of his will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding. Submit your wills entirely in all things to the holy will of God, that with ſacred pleaſure you may do whatſoever he requires, and cordially acquieſce in all his wiſe and gracious appointments. Give him the chief place in your affection, that you may fear, truſt, and love him ſupremely, that you may ardently deſire his favour and approbation, and delight in his preſence and precepts more than

than in all riches. Dedicate to the Lord thoſe lives that he hath given you, which he hath hitherto preſerved amid innumerable dangers, that they may be employed in his ſervice, and to his honour. Yield your members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God, that being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, you may have your fruit unto holineſs, and in the end everlaſting life. Surrender to him all the talents with which you are entruſted, with all that you poſſeſs, to which he hath unqueſtionable right; that he may diſpoſe of you, and all your intereſts, as ſeemeth good in his ſight. Let ſuch be the undiſſembled language of your hearts to your gracious Lord: 'Senſible that I am thy creature, the work-'manſhip of thy hands; thy apoſtate creature, 'who hath revolted from under thy ſubjection, 'and having heard thy gracious invitation 'publiſhed in the goſpel, and the comfortable 'way of acceſs to thy Majeſty by one bleſſed 'Mediator, I chearfully conſecrate myſelf, and 'all that thou haſt given me, to thy ſervice. 'Accept, I beſeech thee, O Lord, the free-will 'offering thou haſt diſpoſed me to preſent unto 'thee. May it prove a ſacrifice well pleaſing 'unto God through Jeſus Chriſt, being ſanc-'tified by the Holy Ghoſt.'

3. Inconſecrating your ſervice unto the Lord, contemplate him in thoſe amiable characters in which he is repreſented in ſcripture. He is a Spirit infinite, eternal, inviſible, omnipotent, who requires to be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth.

truth. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin. He is love, and in this was manifeſted the love of God toward us; becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. With him you are connected as your Creator, in whom you live, move, and have your being, whoſe hands made and faſhioned you, and whoſe inſpiration endowed you with underſtanding. You cannot then, in juſtice, withhold from him the ſervice of thoſe powers which he himſelf formed, and which more properly belong to him than to you. He is your bountiful Benefactor, who opens his liberal hand, and gives you all things richly to enjoy pertaining to life and godlineſs, who watches over you by day and by night, loading you with benefits, and making all his paths to drop down fatneſs. If you are not inſenſible to all that profuſion of kindneſs which for long time you have experienced, notwithſtanding your unworthineſs and ingratitude, the recollection of it ought to conſtrain you to yield your ſervice to that gracious Lord, to whom you are infinitely indebted. He is your rightful Sovereign, to whoſe ſceptre you muſt bow, to whoſe authority you muſt ſubmit. Think of his tranſcendent excellencies, the mildneſs and equity of his commands, and the noble deſigns they are intended to promote. All his ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, all his paths

paths are peace; in keeping his precepts there is a great reward, ſo that obedience to the Father of Spirits is at once our duty, intereſt, and happineſs. By calling you to this ſubjection, he means to regulate your inclinations and actions by his perfect law of liberty, to ſtrengthen you by his Spirit, to attend you with his divine preſence, to encompaſs you with his favour as a ſhield, and to render you eternally bleſſed in conformity to his will, and the enjoyment of his glory. In theſe and other lovely characters and relations, ought you to contemplate the Moſt High, when you would devote yourſelves to his ſervice.

4. Let this voluntary dedication of your ſervice to the Lord be the reſult of mature deliberation. Let it be done with profound humility, and firm reliance on Jeſus Chriſt for acceptance. I ſay, that it ought to be the reſult of mature deliberation. In the words of God by Solomon, 'Be 'more ready to hear than to give the ſacrifice of 'fools;' for they conſider not that they do evil. 'Be not raſh with thy mouth, and let not thine 'heart be haſty to utter any thing before God; 'for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, 'therefore let thy words be few.' Ponder the words of your mouth; ſpeak not unadviſedly with your lips; expreſs not in the divine preſence raſh wiſhes and haſty deſires, but endeavour, with ſerenity and compoſure of mind, under juſt impreſſions of the glory of God, to repreſent your urgent neceſſities, and entire devotedneſs to his ſervice. Watch over your affections,

fections, especially when you transact with God, lest, by attending only to the external part of duty, you present the sacrifice of fools. The deliberation I recommend lies at an equal distance from the opposite extremes of negligence and inconsideration on the one hand, and of excessive caution and want of resolution on the other. Aware of both these errors, maturely consider the sacred authority by which you are invited to join in the service of the Lord, the justice of the claim that he makes upon you, the nature and consequences of this solemn dedication, and the powerful obligations you lie under to comply with this requisition. When you form connections for life, or transact important worldly business, you ponder the whole matter, you consult with respect to the most eligible plan of carrying it into execution. If you prosecute your temporal affairs with such circumspection, ought you not with much greater seriousness and solemnity to engage in the service of God. Avoid, with no less solicitude, the other extreme, of not speedily forming a determined judgment on a matter of vast moment, which admits not of delay. You know not what a day may bring forth. Unnecessary delay, in this instance, may be construed into a denial. He that expects your best services requires you this day to consecrate them to him. Who knows if ever he will again make this demand, or if ever you shall have another opportunity, such as the present, of surrendering yourselves to the care of his providence

vidence, and the influence of his grace. When God is pleaſed to call for your obedience to-day, he may be juſtly offended if you excuſe yourſelves till to-morrow, when it may not be in your power to obey. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and that which you do cheerfully, you do ſpeedily. I ſaid alſo,

That you ought to devote your ſervice to the Lord with profound humility. Seriouſly recollect your meanneſs and inſignificance, the depravity of your nature, and your complicated guilt in conſequence of accumulated tranſgreſſions. View yourſelves as emerging from a deplorable ſtate of choſen apoſtacy from your rightful Lord, wherein you were engaged in actual rebellion againſt him. Remember your ways and doings that have not been good, and loath yourſelves in your own ſight, for your iniquities and abominations. Recollect your many aggravated ſins, whereby you have offended that gracious God, who hath not ceaſed to do you good amid your multiplied provocations. Think of the ungrateful returns that you have made for the innumerable mercies that you have received, which, inſtead of inflaming your love, and kindling your repentance, have been ſlighted and neglected. Contemplate the infinite majeſty and glorious perfections of Jehovah, to whom you offer your poor imperfect ſervices. Endeavour to get your minds deeply impreſſed with his tranſcendent grandeur and glory, who inhabiteth eternity, and before whom all the nations

tions of this earth are as nothing, yea leſs than nothing and vanity. The more elevated are your apprehenſions of God, the more humble will be the thoughts that you entertain of yourſelves, and the higher will be your admiration of the divine condeſcenſion and grace. Review alſo the aſtoniſhing way by which you find acceptance with God, namely by a Mediator, through whom alone you can approach him with confidence and comfort, and obtain favourable reception to the ſervices which you tender him. This humbling conſideration ought to remind you, that you are ſinful creatures, who have nothing to offer worthy of the divine regard, and therefore that your ſole dependence muſt be on him who is the hope of Iſrael. By proper views of ſuch affecting objects, ought your minds to be occupied, when preſenting your ſervices unto the Moſt High. I only add,

That you ought to conſecrate your ſervice unto the Lord with firm reliance on Jeſus Chriſt for acceptance. In all your tranſactions with God, you muſt uniformly have reſpect to the great Mediator, through whom alone we and our performances are well-pleaſing unto the Almighty. If you have a juſt ſenſe of the holineſs of God, if you are conſcious of your own impurity, and the imperfections of your beſt actions, you muſt ſee the indiſpenſible neceſſity of placing all your hopes on the perfect mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, that your offering may prove a ſacrifice of a ſweet

ſmelling

ſmelling ſavour unto God. In this way you may expect deliverance from thoſe guilty fears which might diſturb and annoy you in approaching the divine preſence, and be aſſured that the offer of your ſervices will be graciouſly accepted. Amidſt every difficulty and diſcouragement ariſing from a ſenſe of ſin, imperfection, and infirmity, conſider, that though you are unworthy, he is worthy in whoſe name you preſent yourſelves before God, that he is a merciful and faithful high Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people. Contemplate this mighty One on whom the Lord laid the iniquities of us all, bearing our ſins on his own body on the tree, taking upon him our infirmities, carrying our ſorrows, dying for our offences, and proclaiming to all the ends of the earth, 'Look unto me and be ye ſaved, for I am God and not man.' Behold, in the wonderful conſtitution of the Redeemer's perſon—in his tender compaſſion—in his perfect obedience—in his agonizing death—in the benefits contained in his ſalvation—in the privileges enjoyed by his diſciples—in the covenant ratified by his blood—and in the glory he now poſſeſſes, and hath promiſed to all his followers, the certain proofs and pledges that God is love, and the ſure ground of your confidence before him. Firmly rely then on his great atonement and prevalent interceſſion, who was dead and is alive, that you and your ſervices may be rendered acceptable unto God, and improve his mediation as

the foundation of your encouragement and expectations. In every weakneſs, in every duty, perplexity and danger, depend on Jeſus Chriſt for aſſiſtance and ſupport, for conduct and protection, who hath the Spirit without meaſure, to impart to all who importunately aſk this precious bleſſing. Such ſeems to be the import of the duty to which we are invited in the text, and in this manner ought it to be performed. I proceed,

II. To recommend the practice of it, and to urge you to conſecrate your ſervice to the Lord, which is eſſentially requiſite to obedience, well pleaſing unto him, and is admirably adapted to promote the intereſts of true godlineſs.—May the Lord God grant his aſſiſtance in this attempt, and by his Spirit and bleſſing crown it with ſucceſs.

I know well the extreme difficulty of perſuading men to engage in the ſervice of God. Corrupt diſpoſitions and ſenſual inclinations, with the pernicious example of deſpiſers of that which is good, give them a contrary bias, and lead them away from God. The moſt earneſt entreaties, the moſt powerful arguments, ſeem to ſpend all their force in vain when counteracted by ſuch ſtrong oppoſition. Nevertheleſs, as the motives to duty urged in ſcripture, are the appointed means whereby God is pleaſed to recover men from ſin, and to bring them into his ſubjection, I ſhall ſet before you ſome arguments to induce you to comply with the reaſonable demand in my text, looking to him

him that he may render them effectual. For this purpose I request you seriously to consider —that this is a matter of vast moment and importance—that duty and gratitude to God unite in demanding your service to him—and that the salutary influence of the solemn transaction to which you are called, is suited to produce the happiest effects on your future temper and conduct. I say,

1. That the consecration of your service unto the Lord, is a matter of vast moment and importance. In things of even inconsiderable consequence, in which you are intimately concerned, you reckon that you cannot be too explicit, and that they ought to be so adjusted as to leave no room for uncertainty and doubt. The choice of a business for life—of a place of residence—of the masters you are to serve—the company with which you are to associate—or the settlement of your temporal affairs you look upon as matters of no small moment that must not be neglected. In proportion to the apprehended magnitude of the business, it claims your attention and prudent consideration. The consecration of your service to the Lord, the dedication of all your powers to his honour, in which your eternal interests are deeply involved, is a transaction of the highest importance. He hath a most unquestionable title to your obedience, both as your Lord and Saviour, founded on far better grounds than any other who can claim your respect. It is therefore both your interest and your duty, with the

greateſt alacrity, to comply with the reaſonable and gracious demand made upon you in my text. Were you to decline yielding to it, your conduct might be conſtrued into an obſtinate refuſal, and the conſequences of ſuch perverſity might prove truly alarming and fatal. God will certainly inflict aggravated puniſhment upon thoſe who refuſe to recognize his title, and to ſubmit to his authority. How excruciating muſt be the reflexion to thoſe who are baniſhed from the preſence of the Lord, that their condemnation is the juſt recompence of having preferred the ſervice of divers luſts and pleaſures to ſubjection to him that liveth and reigneth. Whereas, if you willingly offer your ſervice this day unto the Lord, who aſks not any thing becauſe he needs it, but becauſe you need the bleſſings he is ready to beſtow. If you heartily conſent that he ſhall reign over you, that his word ſhall be your rule, that his preſence ſhall be your delight, that obedience to him ſhall be your employment, that his glory ſhall be your ultimate end, that on his mercy and grace all your dependence ſhall be placed; you may humbly hope, that he will forgive you all treſpaſſes, that he will heal your ſpiritual diſtempers, that he will cloath, beautify, ſanctify, enrich, and prepare you for glory; that he will graciouſly accept and abundantly recompence all your labours of love. If any man ſerve me (ſaith the Son of God) him will my Father honour with his protection and preſence, his aſſiſtance and ſupport, and at laſt with

with his approbation before an aſſembled world, when he will ſay to him, 'Well done 'good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the 'joy of thy Lord.' What can poſſibly be ſo grateful, ſo tranſporting to a man of God, as to receive public applauſe, judicially delivered in the preſence of angels and men, from the great Lord of heaven and earth. If any man ſerve me, ſaith the ſame faithful and true witneſs, let him follow me in the exerciſes of humility and love, of obedience, patience, and reſignation; and where I am there alſo ſhall my ſervant be. Hail, you highly favoured of the Lord, who have found grace in his ſight, who, like Enoch the ſeventh from Adam, have this teſtimony, that you pleaſe God, and who in due time ſhall be admitted to be ever with the Lord. Do not theſe remarks place the ſurrender to which you are this day urged in a very important point of view, and incite to the performance of this ſolemn dedication.

2. Conſider farther, that duty and gratitude unite in demanding your ſervice to the Lord. This is an unqueſtionable duty which can admit of no diſpute, and for the neglect of which you cannot produce any ſufficient excuſe. It is frequently and explicitly enjoined, in different forms throughout the ſcriptures, by the ſupreme authority of Jehovah, of which the following paſſages are ſpecimens: 'Yield your-'ſelves unto the Lord. Give unto the Lord 'glory and ſtrength; give unto the Lord the 'glory due unto his name: Bring an offering,

'and come before him; worſhip the Lord in 'the beauty of holineſs. Yield yourſelves 'unto God, as thoſe that are alive from the 'dead, and your members as inſtruments of 'righteouſneſs unto God.' I cannot perceive on what tenable grounds you can refuſe to obey ſuch a juſt and reaſonable requiſition, or under what juſt pretext you can decline to devote your ſervice unto the Lord. You are his property, and will you not allow him to have what is his own? you are his creatures, and will you not honour your Creator? you are his ſervants, and will you not obey your Maſter? Now, upon what principle do you refuſe to give unto God the things that are God's? Your conſent is not neceſſary to entitle him to your ſubjection; that is his due whether you acknowledge it or not. As then you regard the divine authority, and value your own happineſs, reſign yourſelves entirely to your higheſt Lord; that he may employ you as he pleaſes, and that he may order every circumſtance in your lot as ſeemeth good in his ſight. Angels that excel in ſtrength execute his pleaſure, devils tremble at his word, heaven, earth, and ſea, are ſubject to his authority; and will you alone preſume to diſobey his commands, notwithſtanding the aſtoniſhing compaſſion and long-ſuffering he hath exerciſed toward you? This whole aſſembly, perhaps, except a very few, may be willing this day to conſecrate their ſervice unto the Lord, and you may be the only perſons preſent who refuſe to comply with the

the call of the Lord our God. If this is the fact, it will one time or other fill you with conſternation and dread.—Gratitude unites with duty in recommending the voluntary dedication of your ſervice to the Lord. Recollect the many invaluable bleſſings you have received from God. He gave you exiſtence, life, and breath, and all things; his mercies have been new to you every morning and every evening; and when you had loſt and deſtroyed yourſelves, he laid help for you on One mighty to ſave; he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that by his obedience unto death, you might be made righteous; and that through the one offering of himſelf, you might preſent yourſelves holy, living, and acceptable ſacrifices unto God, which is your reaſonable ſervice. He hath viſited you with the glorious goſpel of his dear Son, that your offering might be acceptable, being ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt, who is this day calling you to devote yourſelves unto him. Unaffected by theſe ſtrong proofs of the divine benevolence and compaſſion, and of his mercies, which are paſt reckoning up, will you burſt aſunder the manifold obligations he hath brought you under to his ſervice, and refuſe to enter yourſelves among his ſervants devoted to his fear? Ought you not rather to unite in giving your hearts and hands to the Lord; adopting the words of the royal poet, 'O Lord, I am thy ſervant, truly 'I am thy ſervant (he repeats the words as if highly pleaſed with the thoughts of this rela-

'tion) thou has looſed my bonds. I will pay 'my vows now unto the Lord, in the preſence 'of all the people.' In this becoming reſolution we ought all cordially to join, without ſo much as one diſſenting voice.

3. Conſider the ſalutary influence which this ſolemn tranſaction is ſuited to produce on your future temper and conduct. By this conſideration, which I am now urging, you ſhould be excited to act as becometh thoſe who are reinſtated in the high honour of being kings unto God, who are inveſted with ſpiritual ſelf-dominion, and raiſed to a glorious empire over yourſelves—to behave as thoſe who are conſtituted prieſts unto God, and exalted to the noble employment of preſenting acceptable ſpiritual ſacrifices unto him, of interceding with him for yourſelves and your brethren—to endeavour to prove ſubſtantial bleſſings to the world and the church, and to acquit yourſelves as thoſe who are advanced to the diſtinguiſhing privilege of being the prophets of the Lord, to whom he communicates his mind, and whoſe delightful employment is to inſtruct others in the way of ſalvation. The recollection of theſe important characters, to which you lay claim, ought to induce you to the faithful performance of the work aſſigned you by your Maſter in heaven. Remember that it is his work, and not your own, in which you are to be employed,—that it is his will, and not your own, that muſt be the rule of your conduct,—that

it

it is in his ſtrength, and not your own, that you muſt apply to his ſervice,—that it is his glory, and not your own, which you muſt endeavour to advance. Deeply convinced of the juſtice of what you have explicitly acknowledged, that you are devoted to God, you ought cheerfully to ſubject yourſelves to his ſovereign authority, firmly relying on him, to perfect ſtrength in your weakneſs, and to make his grace ſufficient for you; that you having all ſufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work. Conſidering all that you have as his property, and making his approbation your chief aim, let holineſs to the Lord be engraven in legible characters on all that you do, and on all that you enjoy. The ſeaſonable remembrance that you are devoted to God, may prove, through the divine bleſſing, the happy mean of deterring you from ſin; of recovering you from backſliding, and of renewing you to repentance. This good effect was exemplified in the houſe of Iſrael, who had dealt treacherouſly with the Lord. 'A voice 'was heard upon the high places (when they 'called to mind their relation to God), weeping and ſupplication; for they had perverted 'their way, and forgotten the Lord their God.' It may afford a comfortable ſubject of reflection, in ſeaſons of affliction and perplexity, when God ſeems to have forſaken you. On ſuch an occaſion, the prophet Jeremiah was comforted by the pleaſing thought that he had entered into covenant with God. 'The Lord

'is my portion (ſaith my ſoul), therefore will I 'hope in him.' It may inſpire you with fortitude, in repelling the aſſaults of temptation to which you may be expoſed. This improvement the apoſtle Paul reminds Chriſtians they ought to make of the conſideration that they are the Lords, in words which expreſs his abhorrence of the oppoſite conduct. Shall I take the members of Chriſt, and uſe them to a purpoſe that he hath prohibited! God forbid. And amidſt all the viciſſitudes of this mortal life, and in the proſpect of diſſolution, you may derive conſolation from your being in covenant with God. When deprived of riches and friends, of reputation and health, or any other worldly enjoyment, how reviving the thought, in every change, that you are God's ſervants, devoted to his fear; that whether you live, you live unto the Lord; and whether you die, you die unto the Lord; that whether you live or die, you are the Lord's.

Thus have I explained and recommended the voluntary conſecration of your ſervice this day unto the Lord. Shall I prevail with you, my brethren, immediately to comply with the reaſonable demand now made upon you? Think not that having been early devoted to God in baptiſm by your parents, you may be excuſed from doing any thing in this matter. Your dedication to God in that ordinance, affords not a ſufficient argument why you ſhould be exempted from the duty I have been inculcating. It rather ſuggeſts a ſtrong motive

to

to enforce your compliance. The prayers of your parents in your behalf, far from excuſing you from praying for yourſelves, ought to animate you to greater earneſtneſs and diligence in your ſupplications. All the males among the children of Iſrael, though devoted to God in their infancy, in an ordinance inſtituted for that purpoſe, were nevertheleſs commanded to dedicate themſelves to the ſervice of Jehovah, and from time to time to avouch the Lord to be their God. And can you imagine that this ſolemn tranſaction is leſs incumbent on you than upon them? Conſider then, I beſeech you, that this is not one of thoſe things which you may either do, or refrain from, as you pleaſe. It is indiſpenſibly requiſite, would you obey the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which requires us to give ourſelves unto the Lord. It is truly reaſonable, and may prove highly advantageous. Whether or not do you think that it is better for you to be ſervants of divers luſts and pleaſures, of Satan, and other lords, who will rigorouſly rule you by turns, and make you feel the ſeverity of their uſurped dominion, or to ſerve the only living and true God, through the bleſſed Mediator, whoſe ſervice is perfect liberty, and in keeping whoſe commands, there is a great reward. Come then, let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that ſhall not be forgotten; let us unreſervedly give ourſelves to him, that we may be pardoned, ſanctified, and ſaved by him;

him; and that we may live entirely in obedience to his will, to the glory of his holy name. Thus may the Scripture this day be fulfilled, which ſaith, 'One ſhall ſay, I am the 'Lord's, and another ſhall call himſelf by the 'name of Jacob, and another ſhall ſubſcribe 'with his hand unto the Lord, and ſurname 'himſelf by the name of Iſrael.' And to God, through Jeſus Chriſt, ſhall be aſcribed praiſe, and honour, and glory. *Amen.*

INTRO-

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

COMMUNION SERVICE *.

THE Lord's Supper was inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt, for the benefit of his Church in all ages. In this ſacred ordinance the diſciples of the Son of God call to their thankful remembrance his wonderful incarnation, his holy life, his direful ſufferings, and agonizing death. They ſolemnly commemorate the ſtupendous work of their redemption, they delightfully contemplate the aſtoniſhing means whereby it was accompliſhed, and the glory of Jehovah, therein moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed. In this divine repaſt, provided by infinite wiſdom and love, they participate of the moſt ineſtimable benefits, and are regaled with the choiceſt ſpiritual entertainment, from which they obtain nouriſhment and growth in grace. In the exerciſe of faith, and hope, and joy, they look forward to the inheritance of the ſaints in light, and anticipate the felicity and glory that is reſerved for them in the celeſtial kingdom of their Father. That they may enjoy the ſublime pleaſures, and ſubſtantial advantages with which this noble ſervice is accompanied, the honour of the Redeemer, their own duty and intereſt, require that it be performed

* After reading 1 Cor. xi. 23. &c.

formed with ſuitable correſponding diſpoſitions of mind. Thoſe who are deſtitute of the grace requiſite to a comfortable attendance on this inſtitution, who are unacquainted with the precious bleſſings there exhibited and conveyed to true Chriſtians, though they partake of the external ſymbols, cannot derive from it real benefit and conſolation, but are in danger of eating and drinking unworthily. I therefore requeſt your candid attention, whilſt I ſet before you, on the one hand, the character of thoſe who are excluded by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt from this ſacred feaſt; and, on the other, the temper and conduct of thoſe who are invited by him to this holy communion.

Perſons of the following deſcriptions are excluded by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt from this ſolemn feſtival, namely, 'The openly profane,' who contemn the truths and ways of God, who trample on his mercies, abuſe his patience, inſult his authority, and make light of his ſalvation—who are proud, cruel, vindictive, and treat with ſcorn and deriſion the people of God, and things ſacred—who glory in their ſhame, publicly declare their ſin, and hide it not, and have become bold and impudent in committing all manner of iniquity. Even within the bounds of the church, ſuch characters may be found as the Apoſtle Paul mentions in his Epiſtle to the Epheſians, who being alienated from the life of God, have given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs. Unto the wicked,

ed, God ſaith, 'What haſt thou to do, to de-'clare my ſtatutes, or to take my covenant in 'thy mouth, ſeeing thou hateſt inſtruction, and 'caſteſt my words behind thee?'—'The ſe-'cretly hypocritical,' who profeſs to know God but in works deny him; being abominable and diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate,—who, notwithſtanding they call Chriſt Lord, yet do not the things which he ſays; and who, far from eſteeming his yoke eaſy, and his burden light, reckon them grievous and burdenſome,—who, though you bear the name of Chriſt, are deſtitute of his ſpirit and reſemblance,—who, having the form of godlineſs, are devoid of its life and power,—and who, whilſt you appear outwardly righteous before men, are within full of diſſimulation and iniquity—Why would you draw nigh to God with your mouths, and honour him with your lips, whilst your hearts are far from him, and thus provoke him to do among you a marvellous work, and a wonder?

'The practically diſobedient,' who do not conſcientiouſly perform the various duties incumbent upon them, in the ſeveral capacities and ſtations which they occupy—who are living without God, and without Chriſt in the world; deſtitute of love to God, of faith in the Redeemer, of repentance for ſin, of truſt in Providence, influenced neither by the promiſes or threatenings contained in the ſcriptures—who have never been taught by the grace of God, that bringeth ſalvation, to deny all ungodlineſs

godlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world; looking for the bleſſed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, even our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt;—who deny not themſelves, nor take up the croſs and follow Jeſus Chriſt in the exerciſes of piety and devotion, of humility and meekneſs, of holineſs and righteouſneſs, of patience and reſignation, in which he hath ſet an example that we ſhould follow his ſteps. If you think that Jeſus Chriſt is a hard maſter, and his ſervice grievous, why would you enter into covenant with him to be his ſervant forever? If you take pleaſure in the practice of iniquity, why pretend ſubjection to him who, in virtue of the office he ſuſtains, ſaves his people from their ſins? If you are attached to this world as your portion, why engage to fight under his banner, who hath explicitly declared, that you cannot ſerve God and Mammon? If you are haughty, malicious, unjuſt, and unholy, why profeſs to have fellowſhip with the juſt and holy One of God, who requires you to love your enemies, to bleſs them that curſe you; and hath eſtabliſhed this maxim as a rule of conduct to his diſciples, 'whatſoever you would that men ſhould do to you, do you even ſo to them.' Perſons of ſuch deſcriptions are prohibited, by the great Maſter of aſſemblies from going to the Lord's table. In proof whereof, read Gal. v. 19, 20, and 21.

On

On the other hand, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt graciouſly invites to this holy communion, thoſe who having been baptized into his name, cordially believe his goſpel, ſubmit to his inſtructions, righteouſneſs, and authority, participate in the privileges peculiar to his diſciples, and obſerve his precepts with their whole hearts, in firm reliance on his faithful promiſes, ratified and confirmed by his death;—who having been effectually convinced, by the word and ſpirit of the living God, of their loſt and periſhing condition by tranſgreſſion, and deeply affected with their character and ſtate, have fled for refuge, from ſin and deſtruction, to the all-ſufficient Saviour, the only hope ſet before us in the goſpel;—who having experienced the renovating power of the holy Spirit, are born of God, made partakers of the divine nature, and have put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs;—who having mourned for their ſins, and turned from the error of their ways, are ſtriving againſt remaining corruptions, ſolicitous to live under the conſtraining influence of gratitude to him who loved them, who died for them, and roſe again;—whoſe prevailing deſire and chief buſineſs is to know, to love, to ſerve, and pleaſe God, to appear with acceptance in his preſence, and to derive their beſt comforts from his ſpirit, his promiſes, and the hope of eternal life laid up for them in heaven;—who, animated by ſincere and fervent love to their brethren, compaſſionate the diſtreſſed,

diſtreſſed, relieve the needy, inſtruct the ignorant, admoniſh the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, praying for them all at the throne of grace, to which there is always acceſs.

In few words, To you that walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, the deſire of whoſe ſouls is to God, and the remembrance of his name, I addreſs the urgent invitation of Wiſdom, 'Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine 'which I have mingled. Forſake the fooliſh, 'and live; and go in the way of underſtand-'ing.' To you who are hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs, and ardently longing to appear before God at his table, I ſay, in the words of the parable delivered by Jeſus Chriſt, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' Hearken to his alluring voice, which ſaith, 'Let him that is athirſt come, and whoſoever 'will, let him take the water of life freely,' Rev. xxii. 17. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghoſt.

THE CONSECRATION PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING.

LET us give thanks to God, and call upon his name. Eternal, moſt glorious Jehovah, in whoſe preſence there is fulneſs of joys, and at whoſe

whoſe right hand there are pleaſures for evermore. We praiſe, honour, and extol thee, the great Creator, Preſerver, and Lord of all; becauſe thou art good, and thy mercies endure forever. We preſent before thee, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and God of gods, our united grateful thankſgivings, who remembered us in our low eſtate, and ſent thy only begotten Son into this world, that whoſoever believeth in him, might not periſh, but have everlaſting life. We aſcribe bleſſing, and honour, and glory to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who came in God's great name to deliver us from ſin and miſery, and to reſtore us to the favour, the image, and enjoyment of our Maker. We celebrate the praiſes of the Holy Ghoſt, the Comforter, who, with the everlaſting Father, and his only Son our Lord, is one living and true God; who convinces of ſin, righteouſneſs and judgment, who takes of the things of Chriſt, and ſhews them unto us; who leads unto all truth, who helps our infirmities, and ſeals unto the day of redemption. We bleſs thee, Lord of heaven and earth, for the ordinances thou haſt appointed in thy church, and particularly for the inſtitution of the holy Supper, the precious legacy bequeathed to us by our ſuffering Saviour, as the memorial of his love, and of his death. Grant, O bleſſed God, that thy glory may fill this houſe to-day, that thy power may be felt in thy ſanctuary, that thy grace may enrich, and thy mercy may repleniſh every ſoul in this aſſembly.

Lord

Lord God merciful and gracious, deal bountifully with thy children, who are to ſit down here at thy table; clothe us with the robes of righteouſneſs, and garments of ſalvation; make thyſelf known to us in the breaking of bread, and ſatisfy us abundantly with the goodneſs of thy houſe, even of thy holy place. May the bread which we are to break, prove to us the communion of the body of Chriſt that was broken for us. May the wine poured into this cup of bleſſing, be to us the communion of the blood of Chriſt which was ſhed for us. Honour us, we beſeech thee, O God of ſalvation, with thy gracious refreſhing preſence; grant us a comfortable ſenſe of thy pardoning mercy, renewed communications of righteouſneſs and life, of grace and conſolation, with the earneſts of eternal glory. We earneſtly pray, that the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, may enlighten the eyes of our underſtandings, to ſee what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance reſerved in heaven for the ſaints. O thou who art love, enable us to comprehend what is the heighth and depth, the length and breadth of the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulneſs of God. Hear, and anſwer, O Lord God, theſe our fervent ſupplications, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt; and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God, be honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

ADDRESS TO COMMUNICANTS.

In this bleſſed ordinance, there is exhibited a lively ſtriking repreſentation of Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified; who is the power and the wiſdom of God unto them that are ſaved. This glorious attractive object, the admiration of angels, and the joy of all who believe the goſpel, is here contemplated with peculiar advantage and pleaſure. And his gracious invitation to you, now is; Behold me, look unto me, and be ye ſaved. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the ſin of the world. Look on him whom you have pierced by your iniquities, who was wounded for your tranſgreſſions, who died for your offences, and roſe again for your juſtification. By heart affecting views of your once ſuffering and now exalted Redeemer, I truſt your minds ſhall be comforted, and you ſhall be conſtrained to ſay, of this communion table, what the Patriarch Jacob ſaid of Bethel, This is none other than the houſe of God, and gate of heaven; and to acknowledge with good old Simeon, Now, Lord letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace; for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.—In the ſame night, wherein our Lord and Saviour was betrayed, he took bread, and bleſſed it, and gave it, &c.—He took the cup likewiſe, and gave it, &c.—Steadily, contemplate the divine glory of the Son of God, who

who is adored by all the celeſtial hoſts: view his perfect beauty, who is fairer than the children of men; ſurvey his infinite dignity, who is better than the angels; think of the aſtoniſhing depth of his humiliation, who aſſumed the form of a ſervant; meditate on the complicated ſufferings, and agonizing death to which he ſubmitted, with the joyful everlaſting conſequences reſulting from thence to his diſciples. Attend, this man of ſorrows in his humbled condition, diveſted of tranquillity, eaſe, and reputation, calumniated, perſecuted, and inſulted, by his malicious enemies, as a guilty criminal; whilſt his ſoul was troubled and exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death. Such was his marvellous grace, that, he ſubmitted to the moſt dreadful afflictions, and the moſt painful death, that, he might reſcue us who were ready to periſh, from everlaſting deſtruction, and exalt us, to conſummate felicity and glory.—How ſecretly blended together were the most amiable goodneſs, with the most unparalleled condeſcenſion and invincible fortitude. Never did the most renowned conqueror, flushed with victory, and crowned with ſucceſs exhibit ſo illustrious an appearance and acquire such ſubstantial glory, as our Saviour and Lord, when he triumphed over our enemies. Upon the Croſs he ſpoiled principalities and powers; he blotted out the hand writing of ordinances that was againſt us, he diveſted the world of its alluring charms, he vanquiſhed the whole collected body of ſin, he destroyed

deſtroyed the enmity that had ariſen between God and man, between man and man, between man and his own conſcience; he reconciled all things in heaven and earth, diſarmed death of his terrors, and opened the gates of Paradiſe, that we might enter immortality in triumph. Never was a tree adorned with ſuch precious trophies as our Redeemer's Croſs, never were exhibited ſuch glorious proofs of virtuous proweſs, never was there accompliſhed ſo great a ſalvation. Sing unto the Lord all the earth—Give him the homage of your hearts, the praiſes of your lips, and the obedience of your lives. I beſeech you by the mercies of God, by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt, and by the love of the Spirit, to yield yourſelves unto God, that you may have your fruit unto holineſs, and in the end, everlaſting life. Be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Chriſt alſo walked, who loved us, and hath given himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacrifice to God for a ſweet ſwelling ſavour. Live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himſelf for you. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long ſuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Finally, have compaſſion one to another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, be ſtrong in the Lord. And may the God of love and peace, be ever with you. *Amen.*

CONCLUDING EXHORTATION FROM THE PULPIT.

THE Lord's Supper, whereof a conſiderable number of us have this day been participating, is accompanied with peculiar circumſtances, which at once demonſtrate its beautiful ſimplicity, and its auguſt ſolemnity. No external pomp or grandeur is required in obſerving this divine Inſtitution. The ſimple elements of bread and wine are appointed to be uſed in ſhewing forth our Lord's death; to repreſent the ſpiritual proviſion whereby his diſciples are nouriſhed unto eternal life. Dignity of ſtation, elegance of dreſs, ſplendid appearance, are not requiſite to attendance on this ſacred ordinance, if the hidden man of the heart is ſuitably clothed with the garments of ſalvation and adorned with the graces of the Spirit. Its glory and efficacy does not depend on the number of thoſe who celebrate it, in grateful remembrance of the love of Chriſt, (though it is exceeding pleaſant to obſerve the communion Service well attended by his friends), but is derived from the appointment, Spirit and preſence of him who hath promiſed, wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midſt of them. To have beheld hundred thouſands of Iſrael marching from bondage in Egypt, toward the promiſed land of Canaan; to have ſeen thouſands after

pentecoſt

pentecoſt breaking bread in remembrance of the Saviour's death, would have been ſolemn ſpectacles indeed. But would it have been leſs awful and affecting, to have witneſſed the Preacher of righteouſneſs, with his ſmall family, moved with fear of approaching deſolation, entering into the ark for ſafety, amid the deriſion of the world lying in wickedneſs; or the twelve diſciples dividing the bread and the cup in an upper room. Bleſſed be God, the wonderful intereſting objects there exhibited, and the ineſtimable bleſſings conveyed to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus by this inſtitution, uniformly diſpoſe them to the frequent thankful commemoration of his ſufferings and death, who is their Saviour and Lord, their life and ſalvation.—The ordinance of the Supper is no leſs remarkable for auguſt ſolemnity, than for beautiful ſimplicity; it affords a lively repreſentation of all that is grand, important, and intereſting to Chriſtians; of all that commands admiration, eſteem and reverence; of all that excites love, gratitude, and praiſe. The moſt glorious ſpectacle the world ever beheld, was God, manifeſt in the fleſh, dying upon a croſs; that he might give the cleareſt demonſtration of infinite wiſdom, love, and righteouſneſs, and obtain the redemption of ſinners ready to periſh. In this great event, the chief ſubject of the goſpel, we contemplate the manifeſtation of love that paſſeth knowledge, the fountain of all grace, the foundation of faith, the moſt powerful motive to obedience, and the ſource

of all conſolation and joy;—Intimately connected with this wonderful tranſaction, is the ſacred ſervice of this day, wherein not a few, profeſſedly the ranſomed of the Lord, and born of God, were convened at their gracious Redeemer's table, and partaking of the divine entertainment he hath generouſly provided for their nouriſhment and comfort, receiving the pledges of his love, and the earneſts of his ſalvation; doing honour to their glorious deliverer, contemplating the myſtery of God the Father, and of Chriſt: celebrating his praiſes who died for them, and devoting themſelves as living ſacrifices to him who gave himſelf for them.—O Lord God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and eſtabliſh their hearts unto thee! After this ſolemn ſervice, I would exhort you to humility—fortitude, and—activity.

1. Be humble. This lovely diſpoſition, which is at once the ſtrength and ornament of a Chriſtian, is frequently inculcated throughout the Scriptures in a great variety of forms, which demand your ſerious attention. Indeed all the graces and virtues which adorn the Chriſtian character, like the celeſtial orbs, have their proper ſtation, their peculiar operation and influence:—Temperance lays a reſtraint upon appetite; valour fortifies the mind; patience compoſes the ſoul; love warms the heart; hope animates to vigorous exertion; modeſty beautifies the countenance;

liberality

liberality opens the hand; compaſſion relieves the diſtreſſed; prudence directs to proper conduct; humility brings down high thoughts, which exalt themſelves againſt the knowledge of Chriſt. This amiable temper diffuses its benign influence through every occupation and duty in life. When you are employed in buſineſs, let humility take part in the tranſaction; when you approach the divine preſence, let humility be the garb in which you appear, let it be conſpicuous in every part of your behaviour, in the whole of your converſation; and particularly when you are called to give your ſentiments reſpecting matters of importance, let humility, candour, and impartiality dictate your deciſions.—On all occaſions, ſtudy to appear in this comely dreſs, which ſuits us well, whether we conſider ourſelves as ſinners or as ſaints; this excellent attire may ſeem, when viewed at a diſtance by the vain and gay, through an improper medium, to be too mean a garb, of too dark a colour for them to wear; but did they examine it thoroughly, in a juſt light, they might ſee that it is really a rich and valuable garment. Even in the ſight of God it is of great price. Cheriſh, then, lowly thoughts of your abilities, of your knowledge, of your graces and duties; maintain conſtant dependence on God for every bleſſing, and be content, though little eſteemed by other people, would you ſtand high in the favour of the Supreme Judge of merit. If perſonal good qualities, if acquired accompliſh-

ments, if external circumſtances, are apt to ſwell your minds with pride, to excite complaints of the diſpenſations, of the laws, or grace of God, or to make you ſtart even at the ſhadow of an injury, let humility check every lofty imagination, and lay it low even to the ground. It is too viſible, that we are compoſed of ſuch light combuſtible materials, that every ſpark is apt to ſet us on fire, and every breath to blow us into a flame. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs and long ſuffering, to which many precious promiſes are given in Scripture, that are abſolutely requiſite to diſpoſe you to reliſh and obey the goſpel, and to reſemble our Saviour and Lord, who was meek and lowly in heart. 'By humility, and the fear of the Lord, are riches, 'and honour, and life.'

2. Be courageous. I addreſs you in the words of God to his ſervant Joſhua: 'Be 'ſtrong, and of good courage; be not afraid, 'neither be thou diſmayed; for the Lord thy 'God is with thee, whitherſoever thou goeſt.' Compliance with this direction, which is frequently repeated in the word of God, is indiſpenſibly requiſite, would you acquit yourſelves good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt. True chriſtian fortitude ſtimulates thoſe who act under its influence to the moſt laudable conduct, and renders them ſuperior to the difficulties and dangers which they are called to ſurmount. Maintain then, with undaunted firmneſs, the profeſſion

profeſſion of our moſt holy faith, and adhere cloſely to the practice of commanded duty, amidſt the temptations and diſcouragements that occur in your progreſs through life. You have to contend with many enemies, poſſeſſed of great capacities, of refined artifice, and implacable malice, who inceſſantly endeavour to accompliſh your ruin. You are called ſtrenuouſly to oppoſe the bad maxims and corrupt cuſtoms of the world, that lieth in wickedneſs, and to reſiſt with determined reſolution its frowns and allurements. Beſides, irregular inclinations, and ſinful paſſions, through the power of divine grace, muſt be counteracted and ſubdued. In ſpite of all oppoſition, it is your unqueſtionable duty, intereſt, and honour, to maintain, with heroic confidence, inviolable attachment to the beſt of maſters, to vindicate the purity of religion, and by your animating example, to recommend to thoſe around you the ſervice of God our Saviour. Do not deſpond, and become faint hearted. Be ſtrong in the Lord, for God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind. Suppreſs that timidity which diſtracts and enfeebles your minds, and remember ye diſciples of the Son of God, that greater is he that is in you, than all that are or can be againſt you. 'Wait 'on the Lord, be of good courage, and he ſhall 'ſtrengthen your hearts; wait, I ſay, on the 'Lord.'

3. Be active. Be not ſlothful, but follow-

ers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promiſes, even as they were imitators of Chriſt. Ariſe, and be doing, and the Lord be with you. Some of you know that this advice is both neceſſary and ſeaſonable. The Chriſtian life is not a life of indolence and eaſe, but of conſtant vigorous exertion in the moſt uſeful, pleaſant, and honourable employments. Many difficult and arduous ſervices are incumbent upon you, which muſt not be neglected, or negligently performed. You are called by your Lord and Saviour to deny yourſelves, to take up your croſs daily, and follow him—to reſiſt the many ſtrong temptations with which you may be aſſaulted—to contend with powerful ſpiritual enemies, who endeavour to moleſt and oppoſe you in running and wreſtling for an incorruptible crown—to endure with patience, reſignation, and fortitude, the trials and afflictions wherewith you are viſited—to maintain daily intercourſe with God, in the exerciſes of devotion—to diſcharge with fidelity the duties peculiar to your ſeveral ſtations and relations, ſo as God may be thereby glorified—to do good to all, eſpecially to them that are of the houſehold of faith, by acts of beneficence, mercy, and compaſſion—and to grow in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and in a progreſſive meetneſs for heaven. In the view of ſuch extenſive important ſervices, are you ready to deſpond, and exclaim, Who is ſufficient for theſe things? Though of yourſelves you are not ſufficient

ſufficient to think any good thing, your ſufficiency is of God, who is pleaſed that all fulneſs ſhould dwell in Jeſus Chriſt, to be communicated to you; that as your day is, ſo your ſtrength may be. Beware then of ſloth and indolence, of careleſſneſs or trifling in the work of God, but whatſoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might. Beware alſo of buſtle and ſhow: in attending to your ſpiritual intereſts, take heed that you do not miſtime any part of your buſineſs, or ſuffer one duty to juſtle out another. By activity in the ſervice of your Lord, you will demonſtrate your attachment to him, your delight in his precepts, and your deſire of obtaining his approbation at his glorious appearance.

Permit me to ſay a few words to thoſe who have participated of the Lord's Supper, tho' conſcious they poſſeſs not the character of his diſciples. Allow me to aſk you one queſtion, which I requeſt that you will anſwer to your own conſciences. For what end did you come to this ordinance? Do you imagine that he who ſearcheth the heart, and who knoweth all things, can be impoſed on by an unavailing profeſſion? What extreme folly and inconſiſtency in your publicly and ſolemnly pretending friendſhip for Jeſus Chriſt, and mingling with his diſciples, whilſt you indulge in the practice of ſin, and continue the votaries of the gloomy god of this world? Are not you chargeable with groſs hypocriſy, who rank

yourſelves among the friends of Jeſus Chriſt, whilſt you refuſe to do whatſoever he commands you? Let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your ſins, by righteouſneſs. Let not your attendance upon the Holy Supper conſtitute the whole of your religion, but begin now where you ought long ago to have begun. Diligently uſe every appointed mean of attaining the real character of followers of the Son of God, which you have this day aſſumed. Remember your ways and doings, that have not been good, and the miſery to which you ſtand expoſed, by your tranſgreſſions. Study the word of God, and learn from thence the all-ſufficient remedy provided for your recovery. Earneſtly ſupplicate from God, for Chriſt's ſake, pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace; and having returned to the Shepherd of ſouls, and committed all your concerns into his hands, then come with thankful hearts, and ſhew forth the Lord's death until he come to receive you to himſelf; that where he is, you may be alſo.

I conclude by addreſſing thoſe who have made light of our Lord's gracious invitations, and who have refuſed to obey his dying command. Seriouſly conſider, I beſeech you, the danger to which you are expoſed, of theſe awful words being verified with reſpect to you. 'Verily I ſay unto you, None of 'thoſe men which were bidden ſhall taſte of 'my ſupper *.' By rejecting the kind offers made

* Luke xiv. 24.

made in the gospel, you forfeit the hope of eternal life, and for the most trifling gratifications, run the hazard of everlasting destruction. What a foolish choice do you make in preferring sensual pleasures to fulness of joys in the divine presence—the wealth of this world to the unsearchable riches of Christ—uncertain vanities to the honour that cometh from God. Would you escape the complicated misery and wo such conduct deserves, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved—repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out—accept with humility and gratitude the precious blessings which God hath promised, and through Jesus Christ freely offers to bestow—submit to his righteousness, to his instructions and authority, and earnestly beg of God his Holy Spirit, to renew and sanctify you—to enable you to love and serve him. May he work in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of his grace. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory and honour throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen.*

EVENING SERMON.

SEEMON VIII.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD ILLUSTRATED AND CONFIRMED.

PSAL. cxliv. 15.

Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

THE desire of happiness operates powerfully and universally among mankind. Persons of every description are daily employed in pursuing the favourite objects whereby they imagine this passion may be gratified. There is not any thing, however, as to which the sentiments of mankind have been more diversified, than with respect to the objects wherein true felicity is to be enjoyed. Covetous people seem to think that it is to be found in the possession of riches, the ambitious seek it in the acquisition of honours, and the voluptuous pronounce it to consist in pleasures. Philosophers have entertained very different opinions on this interesting topic, in which many of them were egregiously mistaken. The existence of the creatures

creatures being derived, precarious, and depending entirely on him who gave them being, they cannot prove the source of permanent felicity to themselves, or to others. To give real enjoyment, they must be commensurate to their capacities and duration, to whose happiness they administer, they must relieve their wants, and gratify their desires, whilst their owners must have the entire property and full possession of them, so as to have free access to them at all times. Their happiness must be then extremely small and fluctuating, who, from a distempered constitution, choose for their portion any thing short of the favour of Jehovah, whereas their felicity must be complete who have the Lord for their God.—In the beautiful hymn from which I have taken my text, the royal Poet, after thanksgiving to God for the wonderful works that he had done, and expressing his admiration of God's gracious regard to the children of men, celebrates the victories he had obtained over his enemies. Prayer is then subjoined for the continuance of the divine goodness, that conquest might be productive of peace, with the whole train of blessings which felicitate communities and families. The psalm concludes with pronouncing the people happy who are in such a case, and their far greater happiness, whose God is the Lord. After having shown the import of the privilege belonging to the people whose God is the Lord,—I shall confirm

and illustrate the truth of the proposition contained in the text, that they are a happy people. Do thou, O blessed God, direct and assist our meditations, and grant us comfortable experience of the blessedness of which we are now to attempt the description.

I. I begin with shewing the import of the high privilege mentioned in the text belonging to the people whose God is the Lord. Betwixt him and them there subsists an intimate connection—a reciprocal interest—and an agreeable intercourse, which forms the basis of their felicity, and distinguishes them from persons of every other character. I say,

1. That between God and his happy people there subsists an intimate connection. Much more is intended than their being related to him as their Creator, than their having been dedicated to his service, and their maintaining an external profession of subjection to his ordinances and laws. Jehovah is their compassionate Redeemer. They had foolishly sold themselves for nought into the hands of their enemies, who had enslaved them, tyrannized over them, and exposed them to utter destruction. In his great mercy he redeemed them by the blood of his own Son, who came into this world, and gave his life a ransom for them, and substituting himself a sacrifice for their sins, sustained the punishment which they deserved. By his mighty

mighty power he actually rescued them from servitude and death, and vindicated them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In this astonishing manner he wrought for them a wonderful deliverance, in virtue of which they become his peculiar people; he acquired an indubitable right to their best services, and an unquestionable title to govern and dispose of them according to his pleasure. Firmly persuaded of the infinite importance of what the Son of God hath done and suffered to accomplish their redemption, and of the inestimable value of what he hath promised to bestow upon them, from prevailing love and gratitude to their best friend, they firmly and unfeignedly consecrate themselves to his service and obedience. Heartily convinced that they are doubly his property, and that they are obliged by the strongest ties to submit to his authority, their chief study, and most delightful business is to please God, to do his will, to advance his honour and interest in the world, and to live unto him who died for them, and rose again. —God is also their reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, and in this endearing relation, he exercises paternal care over them; he seasonably and liberally supplies their temporal and spiritual necessities, he affords them constant protection from evil, he compassionates them under all their infirmities and distresses, and administers consolation to them in every affliction. Though he correct them gently

gently for their faults, he passes by many transgressions, he takes the direction of all their interests, and in due time he will exalt them to the possession of a glorious eternal inheritance. Being graciously admitted into his divine family, and constituted joint heirs with his own Son, they participate in all the distinguishing prerogatives conferred upon them who are born of God. Being renovated by the Holy Spirit, and formed after the divine image, they are happily disposed to imitate their heavenly Father, and to study to be harmless and blameless, as becomes the sons of the Most High. In this manner they are intimately related to God, and are delightfully employed in endeavouring to know, obey, and submit to his will even as the angels in heaven.

2. Between God and his people there subsists a reciprocal interest. They participate in his favour and loving kindness, which is better than life, and the permanent source of every desirable blessing, whether temporal or spiritual. In every condition it affords the most agreeable satisfaction, the purest consolation, and gives a relish to every other enjoyment. It comprizes all that is necessary to present and future felicity. It removes every misery, and relieves every want; it gratifies every just desire, it alleviates every affliction, it inspires with fortitude under every weakness, and renders superior to every discouragement. The kind-

ness

ness of God toward his people is not like the favour of men, which soon decays and perishes; it is everlasting, and shall never depart from them. Our greatest earthly comforts often leave us, and prove the occasion of our most pungent griefs and sorrows, but in this consists the happiness of the people of God, that he will not take his loving kindness from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Whilst others anxiously enquire, Who will shew us any good? they are uniformly solicitous to enjoy the light of God's countenance, which puts more gladness into their hearts than when their corn and wine is increased.—As they share in his divine favour, so he possesses their supreme affection. The duty and happiness of man may be resolved into love, which is the fulfilling of the law, and upon which hangs all the law and the prophets. The wickedness of man hath killed this love at the root, and indisposed us to the exercise of it, both toward God and our neighbour. The people of God, however, having their hearts renewed, their tempers rectified, and the love of God shed abroad into their hearts by the Holy Ghost, love him because he first loved them. Contemplating the infinite glory, beauty, and excellence of Jehovah, and their unspeakable obligations to him, their strongest affection is excited. Convinced that if divine love is not supreme, it is spurious, they love God more than all created enjoyments, and fail not to display its

its powerful influence on the pleasant exercises of obedience and submission, of gratitude, confidence, joy, and praise. Thus they return love to God, for his astonishing love to them. In other instances such requitals are not permitted. If God be angry with us, we must not be displeased; if he reprove, we must not censure; whereas those whom he loves, endeavour, through grace, to love him in return, and to give the most substantial expressions of their undissembled affection, which are always acceptable to him, through Jesus Christ.

3. Between God and his people there subsists an agreeable intercourse. The Lord God being infinitely good, and all-sufficient, can render them completely and eternally happy. This God, who is the fountain of life and blessedness, and the giver of all good, is pleased to set them apart for himself, to claim a special interest in them, and solemnly to assure them that he will be their God. As it is written, he saith unto them which were not his people, 'Ye are my people, my inheri-'tance, my peculiar treasure.' From him they receive not only life and breath, food and raiment, wisdom and understanding, conduct and protection, but righteousness and peace, grace and glory, with every good thing. All things are theirs, because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's; all things work together for their good, and all things proper shall be communicated to them, according to their

several

several necessities. From this intimate intercourse, in which the most agreeable correspondence is established between God and them, results the most pleasing satisfaction. He, who is their all-sufficient portion, seasonably and plentifully communicates to them temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, to enrich and satisfy them abundantly. Notwithstanding their happiness is not now complete, this is owing not to any deficiency in the portion which they have chosen, or in the current of divine goodness, which flows incessantly, but to the weakness of their capacities, and the unfavourable station which they now occupy.—Having avouched the Lord to be their God, they have recourse to him in their various exigencies. Deeply convinced of his unalienable right to their best services, and besought by his mercies, they resign themselves, and all their concerns, to be employed and disposed of by him as seemeth good in his sight. With profound humility, and at the same time with joy and gladness of heart, they solemnly consecrate themselves unto God (confiding in Jesus Christ for acceptance and salvation), that he may enrich them with all those blessings which are essential to their happiness, clothe them with his righteousness, sanctify them by his spirit, and impart to them all those benefits that may render life pleasant, death desirable, and eternity joyful. Whatever be their condition, they have recourse to God for every thing

thing necessary to render their circumstances comfortable. Do they walk in darkness, they resort to the Lord God, who is a sun and a shield, that he may illuminate them by the light of his heavenly doctrines and precepts, and defend them from the evils with which they are assailed. Are they in perplexity, difficulted as to the measures most proper for them to adopt, they depend upon him who will be their guide even unto death, that he may conduct them by his counsel, and lead them in the paths of righteousness, for his names sake. Are they depressed with a humbling sense of guilt and impurity, they go to the throne of grace, which God himself hath erected, that they may obtain mercy to pardon, and grace to sanctify and help them in every time of need. Do they find themselves feeble, and unable to sustain the afflictions with which they are visited, and to perform the services required of them, they look to him, that he may make his grace sufficient for them, and perfect his strength in their weakness. When sensible of their manifold necessities, and spiritual poverty, they repair to him, that he may enrich them from his inexhaustible treasures, and liberally communicate to them whatever is requisite to their present welfare, and eternal happiness.

This delightful intercourse with God, my brethren, is the distinguished honour and peculiar privilege of the people whose God is the Lord. If we are indeed his people, we will

will delight greatly in the way of his commandments—we will abound in good works of every sort—we will converse much with God in prayer, presenting before him our earnest supplications for promised blessings, and our grateful thanksgivings for his innumerable benefits—we will approach him as our exceeding great joy, in those institutions he hath rendered sacred by his authority, to which he vouchsafes his presence and blessing, and by means of which he conveys light and strength, peace and comfort to his servants, and trains them up in a progressive meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Thus have I shewn you the import of the high privilege belonging to the people whose God is the Lord, that between him and them subsists an intimate connection, a reciprocal interest, and an agreeable intercourse. I now proceed,

II. To illustrate and confirm the truth of the proposition contained in the text, that they are a happy people. This will be evident, when we have considered that the glorious perfections of Jehovah,—his great salvation,—his divine Providence,—and his precious promises, all conspire to promote their present and eternal felicity.

1. I say that the glorious perfections of God contribute to advance the happiness of his people. There is not any one attribute whereof he hath revealed himself possessed, which

is

is not employed for their real benefit, and is not suited to convey substantial felicity and consolation. 'There is none like the God of 'Jeshurun, who rideth on the heavens, to their 'help, and in his excellency on the sky; the 'eternal God is their refuge, and underneath 'are everlasting arms.' 'Their God is the Most 'High over all the earth, the King of Glory, 'the Lord mighty in battle, a strong rock, and 'a high tower to them that trust in him. He 'delighteth in exercising loving kindness, 'righteousness, and tender mercy.' Being universal Proprietor, he hath all things at his disposal, and therefore they shall not lack any good thing; being an independent Sovereign, he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, and therefore he will make all events subservient to their best interests. The Son of God is their Saviour, Instructor, and Lord; the Spirit of God is their Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter. All that they want, all that they desire, is in God, in whom they boast all the day long, and praise his name for evermore. His omnipresence attends them in all places, at all times, and in all conditions, to preserve them in danger, to illuminate them in darkness, to succour them in temptation, to furnish them for duty, and to comfort them in affliction. By omniscience he is perfectly acquainted with their hearts, their words, their actions, and every circumstance in their lot, which ought powerfully to restrain them from sin, to excite them to study integrity of heart and

and fidelity in his service, whilst it should encourage them, under a sense of their manifold infirmities. By his omnipotence, they are protected from enemies, they are strengthened with all might in their souls, and preserved through faith unto salvation. By his immutability, they are assured of the unchangeableness of his favour and love, the stability of his covenant and promises, and inspired with unshaken confidence in him, the rock of ages. By his consummate goodness all their wants are amply supplied; they are enriched with the choicest blessings, whereby they are agreeably refreshed; they are excited to gratitude and praise, to love and obedience. By his manifold wisdom, of which he hath given the most pleasing demonstrations, they are instructed so as to become wise unto salvation, they are directed to order their affairs with discretion, and safely conducted in their journey toward the heavenly and better country. By his immaculate holiness, of which he hath every where given the most illustrious manifestations, they are taught the odious nature of sin, they are presented with a perfect pattern of that purity to which they ought to be conformed, and have pointed out the source from whence it must proceed. By his everlasting faithfulness, they enjoy the most comfortable assurance that all his exceeding great and precious promises, containing every thing necessary to life and godliness, shall receive their

their full accomplishment in due season. This prospect dispels their fears, quickens their hopes, comforts their hearts, and enlivens their joys. In few words, the mercy of their God pardons their sins, and rescues them from misery. His love possesses their souls, his patience bears with their infirmities, and waits for the most proper season, to be gracious unto them. Say then, are they not a happy people in whose behalf the perfections of Jehovah are thus employed !

2. The great salvation of God conduces to promote the happiness of his people. They participate of all those precious benefits, which give the noblest demonstration of the loving kindness of the Lord, which were procured for them by the blood of Christ, and are conveyed to them by the powerful agency of the Holy Ghost. Though I cannot enlarge at present on this extensive subject, I shall mention a few of those honourable privileges contained in the salvation of God, whereby his people are felicitated. They are freely justified, and in virtue of this gracious act, they obtain the pardon of all their sins, they are restored to the divine favour, and invested with a right to eternal life. They are delivered from the curse of the law, which they had incurred; they are received graciously into God's sight, and constituted heirs of everlasting inheritance. If you wish to know the worth of this blessing, ask the convinced transgressor, who is groaning under

der an afflicting sense of the divine displeasure, what estimate he hath formed of it. He will tell you it is an inestimable treasure, which he esteems a greater mercy than to possess all the kingdoms of the earth, that it forms an essential ingredient of true happiness. They are renovated by the Holy Spirit, transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, made partakers of the divine nature, of those amiable graces which proceed from God, and shew forth his praises. They become followers of God, in his imitable excellencies, as dear children; being holy, as he is holy; merciful, as he is merciful; and perfect, as he is perfect. Grace in them corresponds to grace in Jesus Christ, as the impression made upon the wax agrees with the seal by which it was made, or as face answers to face in the glass. Wonderful advancement! high happiness indeed! to resemble the blessed God—to be made sons of God—to have one Father, one Spirit, and one inheritance with the first-born among many brethren, and, by progressive renovation, to be made meet for heaven. They are liberated from the power of Satan, the bondage of corruption, the contagious influence of a present evil world, and the second death; yea, from the hands of all their enemies, that they may serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all their days. The fetters of iniquity are broken, a spirit of liberty is communicated to them, in consequence of which they enjoy the most glori-

ous

ous freedom, and participate in a spiritual, perfect, and everlasting deliverance, which shall be for ever celebrated in the highest strains of gratitude, through immortal ages. Blessed state! If the Almighty Redeemer can save them, they are safe. If he justify, who shall condemn? If he be for them, who shall be against them? If the Son of God make them free, they shall be free indeed; if he keep them, who shall pluck them out of his hand?—Once more,

They are dignified, exalted to the most honourable condition, and the most delightful employments. They are joined to the Lord, so as to be one spirit with him; they are made kings and priests unto God, they are formed to be temples for the Holy Ghost, they are possessed of the most excellent dispositions, they are conversant with the most sublime subjects, they associate with the best society, and are engaged in the most noble exercises. Like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, they walk with God; like David and Paul, they serve the Lord; and with Zacharias and Elizabeth, they walk in his ordinances blameless. They delight in the habitation of his house, and rejoice in his testimonies more than in all riches. Compare with this the business in which the profane, the ambitious, the covetous, and the voluptuous are employed, and say, Is not the work of the Lord honourable and glorious, are not his people truly happy?

3. The kind providence of God contributes to

to advance their felicity. I am not now to speak of the universal providence of Jehovah, which extends to all the creatures, and to all events, but of that peculiar tender regard which he discovers towards his own people. 'The 'eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout 'the whole earth, to shew himself strong in be- 'half of them whose heart is perfect toward 'him. The eye of the Lord is upon them that 'fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.' He watches over all their temporal concerns; he upholdeth their souls in life; he is their refuge and their strength, and in straits a present aid. Sometimes he restrains the rage of their implacable enemies, and in many instances he hath disposed them to perform those friendly offices which have proved of essential advantage to them. Memorable instances of this sort are recorded in the scriptures. Cyrus, king of Persia, though he knew not God, was honoured to be the instrument of his people's deliverance from captivity. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, became a friend to Daniel, the prophet; and to the apostle Paul, friends were raised up in the court of Nero. At other times he hath rendered the hostile designs and malicious actions of their adversaries subservient for promoting their interest and salvation. The envy of Joseph's brethren, which induced them to sell him to the Ishmaelites, was made the mean of his future exaltation to be lord over all the land of Egypt. The enmity of Haman the

Agagite against Mordecai the Jew opened the way for his preferment, and the preservation of the Jews, whom that proud man meant to destroy. In this manner, by an astonishing variety of ways, doth God preserve his people in the enjoyment of temporal safety, in the midst of enemies and dangers.

He likewise takes care of their spiritual and best interests. They are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation; he preserves them blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints, and delivers them from every evil work to his heavenly kingdom. Sometimes when timid and faint-hearted he withholds them, as Gideon did the fearful among his soldiers, from temptation and conflict. At other times, when contending with powerful opposition, he strengthens them with all might by his Spirit; he girds them with strength, and makes their way perfect, so that they surmount the greatest difficulties, and vanquish their most potent adversaries. At all times, even when the powers of darkness threaten, when the world frowns, when the tide of corruption flows, the sun of persecution beats, and the wind of temptation arises, he maintains them in safety, and keeps them in his love, looking for his mercy unto eternal life. They are preserved in Jesus Christ, on whom the chastisement of their peace was laid; and who is entrusted with all power in heaven and on earth. His cross, like the tree which Moses cast into the waters of Marah,

Marah, renders the bitter waters of affliction sweet and pleasant. His blood being sprinkled on their hearts and consciences, divine judgments are averted, and they dwell in safety under the shadow of the Almighty. His Spirit supplies them with strength in their souls, to contend with difficulties, to resist temptations, to sustain afflictions, to improve ordinances, and to exercise grace. Aware of the danger arising from security on the one hand, and from presumption on the other, they commit themselves to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator, that he may direct, uphold, and save them. The providence of God then affords a powerful argument to prove the felicity of his people, and to confirm the truth of the proposition I am endeavouring to demonstrate.—The last argument which I shall at present adduce to shew the happiness of the people of God is taken from,

4. His precious promises, which by their accomplishment complete their present and everlasting happiness. The unchangeable veracity of Jehovah absolutely requires the fulfilment of his promises which are ratified by his oath, and confirmed by the blood of his Son. This lays a sure foundation for the faith and hope of the saints in every age to rest upon, amidst every intervening obstacle. His consummate ability gives the strongest assurance that he will never fail to make good his word, and to do as he hath said. He who hath promised is able to perform, and to do exceeding

exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. We may therefore appeal to his people as did Joshua of old, 'ye know in 'all your hearts, and in all your souls, that 'not one thing hath failed of all the good 'things which the Lord your God spake con-'cerning you, all are come to pass unto you, and 'not one thing hath failed thereof.' The promises of God, of which they are the heirs, are justly represented by an apostle as exceeding great and precious. They are very many in number, and contain the greatest blessings which God hath to bestow; they are exceeding precious, comprehending every thing valuable in heaven and on earth. They are perfectly suited to relieve all the wants of his people. Whatever he hath promised they certainly need, and whatever they want he hath undoubtedly promised. If you are unacquainted with your necessities, you may learn what they are from the promises of God; or if you know not the promises, you may be instructed by studying your own necessities. Must not they, then, be a happy people, all whose wants the mighty God the Lord stands engaged by his faithful word amply to supply? To fix the conviction of this important truth more deeply in your mind, I shall select a specimen from the Old, and another from the New Testament: It is written, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. 'The Lord God is a 'sun and shield, he will give grace and glory, 'and no good thing will he withhold from them that

'that walk uprightly.' Jehovah is the inexhaustible fountain of life and light, by whose refreshing beams, his servants are quickened, illuminated, fructified, and comforted. The Lord will give grace—all those spiritual blessings requisite to correct and sanctify their temper, to change their condition, and to prepare them afore unto glory. And after they have finished their course here below, he will give them glory, and conduct them into his presence, where is fulness of joys, and rivers of pleasures for evermore. And that they may have all that is requisite to consummate their happiness, he will withhold no good thing from them; he will give them contentment in poverty, humility in affluence, deliverance from trouble, or patience to bear it, opportunity to enjoy his goodness, or freedom from evil, and introduction into his eternal kingdom and glory.

Again, it is written, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. 'All things are yours, whether ministers, or 'the world, or life, or death, or things present, 'or things to come; all are yours, and ye are 'Christ's, and Christ is God's.' These remarkable words of the apostle Paul to the sanctified in Christ Jesus, are beautifully illustrated by what he saith elsewhere: 'We 'know that all things shall work together for 'good to them that love God, to them that 'are called according to his purpose.' Every thing shall be conducive to the temporal, spiritual, and eternal benefit of his people.—Thus have

have I endeavoured to shew you the happiness of the peculiar people of God, and to evince the truth of the proposition contained in my text, of which I now suppose that you are fully satisfied.

Let it be your daily study and chief ambition, my brethren, to attain the character and felicity of them whose God is the Lord. You have the highest encouragement you can reasonably desire, to seek the enjoyment of this glorious privilege. Such are the riches of God's grace, that he forgives all trespasses; such is the efficacy of the blood of Christ, that it cleanseth from all sin, and such is the mighty influence of the Spirit of power, that he can soften the most obdurate heart, and subdue every iniquity. Let the wicked then forsake his way, his former sinful practices, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, the corrupt dispositions he hath hitherto indulged, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. His gracious call to you now is, 'Yet return again unto 'me, saith the Lord.' Obey his voice, abandon all your transgressions, come unto him by Jesus Christ, and he will in no ways reject you. Deeply convinced of your sin and folly, earnestly implore his pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace; throw down the weapons of rebellion that you have employed against him, and submit yourselves unto him as his willing dutiful subjects, that you may henceforth

henceforth walk in his ways, and live to his praise. Then may you hope to experience the happiness that you have heard imperfectly described to your present comfort and everlasting joy.

To conclude, I solemnly call upon you whose God is the Lord, to justify your claim to this noble prerogative by being zealous of good works. For this purpose Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. This is the distinguishing badge, the indispensible duty, and delightful employment of the people of God. Be active and diligent in the practice of piety and devotion, of righteousness, mercy, and charity. 'Be stedfast and 'immoveable, always abounding in the work 'of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your 'labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Take heed that your conduct proceed from good principles, from love to God and his authority, from the ardent desire of advancing his glory, and that it be regulated by the directions given in the scriptures. Be animated to the faithful performance of every part of duty by the love displayed in your redemption, by the power employed in your conversion, and the promises given you of present assistance and future glory. In the service of God, you will find the highest pleasure and satisfaction; wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. Keep fully in view the

perfect example of Jesus Christ, the chosen One from among the people; contemplate his beautiful and lovely deportment, amid the divine majesty that shone through the vail of his humiliation. See him frequently employed in the sublime exercises of devotion, in all things yielding unremitting obedience to God, continually going about doing good to men, scattering the choicest blessings around him wherever he went, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, instructing the ignorant, bearing the infirmities of the weak, and forgiving the faults of the injurious. Set yourselves of fixed purpose to follow the amiable example of this express Image of the Father's person, in humble dependance upon his own promised grace. Then shall you be his disciples indeed, the peculiar people of God, in whom he taketh pleasure, whom he blesseth, and delighteth to honour.—The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

I next call upon you who have never yet experienced the happiness of the people whose God is the Lord, to give yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead. I know that you all profess to be the peculiar people of the Most High, but what avails your profession if you derive not from it the substantial felicity which is inseparably connected with the actual possession of this inestimable

ble privilege, if you do not vindicate the justice of your claim by universal subjection to your highest Lord. What proofs do you give that he is your God? Do you from the heart believe and obey him in all things whatsoever he hath said unto you, esteeming all his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way. What avails your pretended reverence for his name if you seek not his mercy and favour; your maintaining the form of godliness, whilst you despise its power; your professed esteem for his benefits if you despise his laws? Why are you attentive to the external part of duty, whilst you neglect to keep your hearts with all diligence. Deal not deceitfully with God; if you persist in your sins, and dishonour him by your lives, you forsake your own mercy, and forfeit that substantial happiness which is to be found in God alone. Why will you halt between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him. Choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the God whom your fathers served, in whose land you dwell, or other gods? If you love not the Lord our God, if you esteem him a hard master, who imposes a heavier burden on you than you can endure, if you think his commandments grievous, and his service intolerable; go serve another master, and seek happiness from another source than God. O foolish and unwise, do you thus requite the Lord who loved us, and gave himself for us, that he might constrain us

to

to choose him for our all-sufficient portion and to live to his glory. Would you participate in the supreme felicity of having the Lord for your God, heartily renounce subjection to the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, the great deceiver and destroyer of mankind. Pursue not as your chief happiness, the riches, the honours and pleasures of this world, which may steal away your hearts from God: Yield not to those corrupt propensities that lead to dishonour God, and to wrong your own souls. Return unto the Lord with your whole hearts, take with you words, and say unto him, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; thou art our portion 'which we have chosen, O Lord.' Place all your dependance on the righteousness and intercession of Jesus Christ, for pardon of sin, the acceptance of your services, and eternal salvation; and on the Holy Spirit for conduct, assistance, sanctification and consolation. Unreservedly devote yourselves to God, that you may rejoice in his love, and trust in his providence and promises. Thus may you hope to enjoy the sublime happiness of the people whose God is the Lord. To Him be honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

THE

SERMON IX.

THE EVIDENCES WHEREBY REAL CHRISTIANS MAY BE KNOWN.

MATT. xii. 33.

The tree is known by his fruit.

THIS general rule delivered by our divine Master, justly deserves serious attention. The fruit of any tree clearly discovers its nature and quality, and from thence we may judge of it with ease and certainty. No man pronounces a tree corrupt, when its fruit is good, or affirms that a tree is good which bears bad fruit: Such decisions involving glaring contradictions, are too absurd to be formed by persons of sense and discernment. The import of the maxim before us is plain and obvious, whether intended by our Saviour to be applied to himself, who had been casting out devils, or to the Pharisees, who attributed his astonishing power to his connection with Beelzebub. If this proverbial saying was spoken by Jesus Christ in reference to his own particular circumstances, its meaning will be shortly this: You must acknowledge either that I am a good man and do

good works, or that I am a bad man and do ill works: To say that I do good works, such as expelling devils from those possessed by them, and yet to affirm that I am wicked, is as palpable an absurdity, as to assert, that a corrupt tree produces excellent fruit. You must either condemn the miracles I perform as pernicious, done in confederacy with Satan, or admit that they are benevolent; attribute them to the power of God, to which they ought to be ascribed, and approve of my conduct. If it had a special respect to the Pharisees, to whom it was directed, the import will be to the following effect: You must either say what is true, and do what is good; or renounce all pretensions to be just and good men. To claim the venerable characters of righteous and devout, whilst you do not vindicate the justice of your pretensions by the exercises of righteousness and devotion, is as inconsistent as if you maintained that the tree is sound and good, which brings forth naughty bad fruit. If you are indeed righteous, as you profess, you will abound with the fruits of righteousness, the proper evidence that your hearts are renewed, and your persons justified; whereas, if you are wicked, you will work iniquity, which will give convincing proof that you act under the influence of corrupt vicious dispositions. In the former sense the words of the text suggest a satisfying testimony to our Lord's divine mission, derived from the works he performed, which bare witness that he came from God.

According

According to the latter interpretation, we are furnished with a certain criterion, whereby we ought to judge of our spiritual state, and the character of those of whom we are obliged to form an opinion. Considering this axiom in the last mentioned sense, I purpose, in dependance upon God, to shew,

I. That mens visible conduct and practice afford the best evidence of their real character, both to themselves and others. And,

II. That the rule of judgment here delivered by Jesus Christ, is the most certain, and the most equitable.

O Thou, who knowest our insufficiency, assist us, we beseech thee, at this time; grant that what may be said on these subjects, may, through thy countenance and blessing, promote thy glory, and our edification.

I. I begin with shewing, that mens visible conduct and practice afford the best evidence of their real character both to themselves and others. The scriptures, which abound with beautiful figurative language, taken from natural images, familiar to mankind, sometimes represent the peculiar people of God, under the instructive resemblance of fruit-bearing trees. By this pleasing emblem borrowed from vegetation, the royal Poet delineates the godly man, whose delight is in the law of the Lord: 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers 'of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his 'season, his leaf also shall not wither, and 'whatsoever he doth shall prosper.' As a tree placed

placed in a rich well-watered soil, thrives, flourishes and yields abundant crops, so the righteous produce the fruits of holiness in season, their words being to their actions what the leaves are to the fruit, ornamental and useful. The prophet Jeremiah employs the same elegant figure, when describing the happy state of those who place their confidence in God: 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, 'and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be 'as a tree planted by the waters, that spread-'eth out her roots by the river, and shall not 'see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be 'green, and shall not be careful in the year of 'drought, neither shall cease from yielding 'fruit.' In the sublime language of God's servant, Isaiah, the citizens of Zion are emphatically denominated, 'trees of righteousness, 'the planting of the Lord, that he may be glo-'rified.' Having been planted in the house of the Lord, in a luxuriant soil, and advantageous situation, they flourish like the palm tree, they grow like the cedar in Lebanon, they still bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright. The servants of God placed by the waters of the sanctuary under the warming beams of the sun of righteousness, encompassed by the favour of heaven, appear in constant verdure, increasing with the increase of God; their good conversation and example, like a rich perfume, diffuses a delightful fragrancy all around them. To this graceful similitude our Lord probably alluded in this proverbial

proverbial saying, 'the tree is known by his 'fruit.'

The fruits whereby the upright among men are distinguished and adorned in their several capacities and stations are the exercises of universal, constant, and persevering obedience to the holy and perfect will of God, which spontaneously arise from union with Jesus Christ, the root as well as offspring of David. All the works that God hath done in, and for the benefit of his church are admirably adapted to beautify and fructify the objects of his love and care. For this purpose he hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. Remarkable are the words of our Saviour to his disciples, 'Ye have not 'chosen me, but I have chosen you; that you 'should bring forth much fruit.' For this end 'the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that 'he might redeem us from all iniquity, and pu-'rify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of 'good works.' For the same salutary purpose 'they are quickened by the Holy Spirit, they 'are renewed after the divine image, and be-'come God's workmanship, created in Christ 'Jesus unto good works.' Indeed all the manifold grace bestowed upon them, all the glorious privileges with which they are invested, are designed thoroughly to furnish the man of God unto all good works. Their minds are occupied with a rich treasure of knowledge and precious thoughts; their hearts, replete with

with good affections devise liberal things, and form devout resolutions; the memory lays up in store the providences and word of God, and their lives in every age and condition are embellished by those fruits, which, in respect to the efficient cause by which they are produced, are denominated fruits of the spirit, in reference to the matter of which they are composed, are called fruits of righteousness, and in relation to the condition of those from whom they proceed, are said to be fruits meet for repentance. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, with the duties of piety and devotion; humanity, justice, benevolence, mercy, and charity, with other graces and virtues, are the pleasant fruits whereby true Christians are distinguished, not only from workers of iniquity, but from formalists and hypocrites, who, tho' in some instances they seem to be exercised unto godliness, yet are far from being stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. To ascertain more clearly the nature and qualities of those evidences whereby Christians demonstrate that they have passed from death to life, and are partakers of the divine nature, please to observe,

1. That the fruits produced, the actions done by them, are excellent and abundant. They are such as the word of God delineates, and extend to every branch of duty, without exception or reserve. The Lord God, having put his laws into their minds, as under the former

mer dispensation they were laid up in the ark of the testimony, and having written them upon their hearts by his Holy Spirit, as they were engraven of old by his own finger on tables of stone, they are happily disposed to transcribe them into their lives, and to yield cheerful obedience to whatever they require. Cordially approving of the law of God as holy, just and good; esteeming his commands above gold, yea, above much fine gold; they choose them for their counsellors and guides through every stage of life, and delight in them after the inward man. Their obedience to the will of God proceeds, not from those corrupt principles by which some people are actuated in his service, that in some cases produce considerable alterations in the temper and conduct. Such are respect to prevailing custom, the love of reputation, the desire of worldly emolument, the restraints imposed by slavish fear of deserved punishment, or regard to present ease and convenience: It flows from higher and purer sources, the love of God shed abroad into the heart by the Holy Ghost, gratitude to him for his inestimable benefits, sacred regard to the divine authority, delight in the duties of obedience, and a desire of obtaining the approbation of their Lord. Their actions are not regulated by impetuous passions, and vicious inclinations, by human examples, or new revelations from heaven, to which some have pretended; but by the perfect pattern and rule exhibited in the scriptures of truth. They are performed, not with

with confidence in their own wisdom and strength, not to establish their own righteousness, or to promote self-interested views; but in humble dependance on the power and grace of Jesus Christ for assistance, and on the righteousness that he hath brought in for acceptance, they endeavour to advance the glory of God, the happiness of their brethren, and their own salvation.

Their fruits are not only excellent, they are also abundant, 'being filled with the fruits of 'righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to 'the glory and praise of God.' True Christians conscientiously respect the great commandments of the law, and solicitously avoid breaking even one of the least of them. Their language is that of the children of Israel in the wilderness, when deeply impressed with a sense of the divine goodness: 'All that the Lord hath spo-'ken will we do, and be obedient.' In every age, whether they belong to the class of little children, young men, or Fathers, they discover a firm attachment to the service of the Almighty; in every condition, whether prosperous or adverse, their chief study is to approve themselves unto God; in the common affairs of life, in business and amusement, as well as in solemn religious services, they act under the influence, not of worldly maxims and customs, but by the direction of the perfect law of liberty. Every station and relation in life which they occupy, they endeavour to adorn by the exercise of those amiable graces and duties which

which do honour to their holy profession, and manifest the power of godliness. Solicitous never to separate what God hath joined together, with hope and confidence in God, they unite reverence, self-denial, and godly fear; with fortitude and zeal, they connect humility and circumspection; sorrow and contrition introduces joy and consolation; love to God and the Redeemer is accompanied with love and benevolence to men. The proofs of their affection for their brethren are not limited to a few, or confined either to their temporal or spiritual interests, so that one or other of them is neglected. Convinced that all the divine precepts are delivered by the supreme authority of the one great Lawgiver, who makes all grace abound towards them, that, having all sufficiency in all things, they may be thoroughly furnished for every good work; they have respect to all God's commandments, whether relating more immediately to himself, or to their neighbour, whether delivered in a negative or affirmative form. Conscious that God spake all the words contained in his law, and that if we study not to obey all, we will not long be submissive to any of them; they respect the spirit as well as the letter of the law, they attend to the internal exercise of the heart, as well as to the external acts of obedience, and to the manner in which they ought to be performed, that what is done may not be rejected of God, as was the sacrifice of Cain, but prove acceptable unto the Lord, as was the offering of righteous

righteous Abel. Would we then, Brethren, be known for disciples of the Son of God, we must renounce every iniquity in which we have indulged, we must lay aside every sin, even that which most easily besets us through natural propensity, bad habit, or peculiar circumstances; and study, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were righteous before God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. By such conduct we shall give satisfying evidence of union with Jesus Christ, of adoption into God's family, and unlimited subjection to the Father of spirits.

2. The fruits produced by genuine Christians are consistent and uniform. Their conspicuous good conduct clearly shews that they have experienced a real and complete change of heart, and that being in Christ they are new creatures formed after his image, and walking in his steps. Having renounced the hidden works of darkness, and the other lords who have had dominion over them, and having returned to God by Jesus Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they act consistently with this high privilege, this solemn profession, and the glorious prospects they entertain. Some there are who discover a glaring inconsistency of character. They neglect God, they refuse to fear, to love, and obey their Creator; but are punctual and equitable in their transactions with their fellow-creatures, they condemn the disobedience of children to their parents, and of servants to their masters, yet persist in perverse disobedience to their Father

Father and Master in heaven; they avoid injuring the reputation of their brethren, yet dishonour God, and take his name in vain. Others there are who take an opposite course; they pretend great veneration for the worship and ordinances of God, but are unjust in their dealings with men; they do not swear or profane the holy name of God, but use unwarrantable freedom with the reputation of their neighbour; they do not openly profane the Sabbath, but are covetous, malignant and unmerciful. Such people act as if they knew not the scripture, which saith, 'He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.' Every deliberate act of disobedience may be considered as a violation of the whole law, every precept of which is stampt with divine authority. If the law of God doth not uniformly withhold from all iniquity, it will not prove an effectual restraint from any sin to which we are strongly solicited. The consistent fruits of uniform Christians form a complete constrast to this incongruity of character. Contemplating the everlasting righteousness of God's precepts, they observe them with their whole hearts, even unto the end; convinced of their consummate excellence and purity, they study to be holy as God is holy; impressed with a deep sense of his omnipotence whom they obey, they serve him with reverence and godly fear; instructed in the spirituality of his nature, they worship him in spirit and in truth; considering him

him as jealous of his honour and glory, they endeavour to perform his service with pure intention, that whatsoever they do, they may do it heartily unto the Lord. They obey from the heart the form of sound doctrine delivered unto them; they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they love the Lord their God, they seek him, they praise him, they cleave to him with the whole heart. After the laudible example of the apostle of the Gentiles, they exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence toward God and man, aiming so to perform every commanded duty, as to please their heavenly Father, and to give no just ground of offence to any one. Notwithstanding many lamented infirmities, remaining corruptions, faults of various kinds, and the occasional prevalence of what may be called their own iniquity, they are sound in God's statutes, they watch, they pray, and strive against sin, and strenuously oppose its pernicious influence. Though deficient in many things thro' the prejudices of education, the bias of natural temper, errors in judgment, and weakness in grace, still there is a consistency, an uniformity, and beautiful proportion, suited to those who are in a double sense the workmanship of God, and whose employment is to follow the Lord fully. The best men on earth have much cause to be humble on account of their unstedfastness in God's covenant, yet are they not chargeable with that detestible inconsisten-

cy

cy, which is incompatible with the integrity peculiar to them, in whose hearts are the ways of God. Nominal Christians, who have a name to live and yet are dead, resemble certain brooks, which flow for some time after plentiful showers, and then become dry; whereas renewed Christians, who have passed from death to life, are like a pure stream, continually supplied with water from a copious spring, which, though meeting with obstacles in its course, yet runs incessantly along its channel, until it reach the ocean. Would we then demonstrate ourselves to be indeed the disciples of Jesus Christ, our deportment must be consistent with our professed relation to our divine Master, conformable to our manifold obligations to him, and the glorious hopes he teaches us to entertain. Amidst acknowledged deficiencies, it must be uniform corresponding to the perfect rule given in scripture, and the amiable example of our Lord and Saviour.

3. The fruits whereby true Christians may be known are constant and abiding. Notwithstanding the difficulties they have to encounter, and the trials to which they are exposed, they continue stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, persevering in the practice of the important duties incumbent upon them. Of the truth of this remark, the most illustrious instances are recorded in scripture, to the immortal honour of the faithful servants of God, who accounted not

not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy. Noah, the renowned preacher, and heir of the righteousness which is by faith, though overcome by temptation, on a particular occasion, and living in a world wherein all flesh had corrupted their way, held on with constancy and firmness in the good ways of the Lord. Upright Job, amidst the most complicated distresses retained his integrity, and would not let it go. A man greatly beloved, named Daniel, though surrounded by the corrupt influence of a heathen court, and threatened with the most terrible calamity, continued in the worship and obedience of the true God. And the apostle Paul, in the prospect of the crown of righteousness laid up for him in heaven, did run his Christian course, not uncertainly, but firmly 'persuaded, that neither life nor death, nor any 'creature could separate him from the love of 'God in Christ Jesus.' After his noble example, Christians may boldly put the question, 'Who shall separate us from the love 'of Christ?' from the love he beareth to us, which, like himself, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and stronger than death; or divest us of love to Jesus Christ, who loved us, and gave himself for us. Shall any thing extinguish that affection to him which is shed abroad into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and established on its proper object by the faithfulness and omnipotence of Jehovah. This peculiar characteristic of the attachment

and

and obedience of Christians to their highest Lord, distinguishes them from those, who, having no root in themselves, in the time of temptation, or tribulation, fall away. The aphorism delivered by God's servant, who was the greatest man in the east, in the following words, ought not to be controverted: 'The 'righteous shall hold on his way, and he that 'hath clean hands shall be stronger and strong-'er.' Persons of this description proceed on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem, not only when it is smooth and agreeable, but when rugged, strewed with thorns, and beset by enemies. They neither turn back, nor willingly decline to the right or to the left hand. They may have reason to complain with the royal prophet, that 'their feet were almost gone, 'and their steps well nigh slipt;' nevertheless, with him they may say, 'Thou, Lord, holdest 'us by our right hands.' Every blessed man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart are his ways, 'goeth from strength to strength, 'until he appeareth in Zion before God. He 'shall run and not be weary, he shall walk 'and not faint.' Like the apostle of the Gentiles, he 'forgets the things that are behind, 'and reaches forth to the things that are before, 'pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' The more victories he obtains over his spiritual enemies, the greater vigour he acquires in the spiritual warfare; the more difficulties he surmounts, the greater strength he attains; the

more closely he walks with God, the larger supplies of grace he receives; the longer he continues in patient continuance in well-doing, the more bright the prospect of glory, honour, and immortality. From this persevering diligence in the way of righteousness, accompanied with so many important advantages, no human authority, no worldly emolument, no present danger, no created enjoyment, shall ever prevail upon him totally to desist. The design of our being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, according to the prophecy of Zacharias, is, 'that we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the 'days of our life.' The immediate end of our redemption is accomplished, when under an abiding sense of the continual presence of God with us, we serve him with chearfulness and joy, in the duties of universal obedience, not merely for a season, but to the conclusion of life. The sublime song that was sung by Deborah and Barak, in which they celebrated the victory they had obtained over their enemies, concludes with this beautiful similitude, expressive of the sentiment I am now illustrating: 'They that love the Lord, shall be as the 'sun when he goeth forth in his might.' By a similar figure doth the wisest of men inculcate the same comfortable truth in the book of Proverbs: 'The path of the just is as the 'shining light that shineth more and more un-'to the perfect day.' Thus the way of the Lord becomes strength to the upright, who, being taught the path of God's command-

ments,

ments, and furnished with the strongest assistances and highest encouragements, observe his precepts with their whole hearts, even unto the end.

Such, my Brethren, are the valuable qualities of those precious fruits whereby true Christians are distinguished from persons of every other description. They are conspicuous in private, domestic, and public life; in their personal and relative capacities; at all times, in all places, in all circumstances, and in such measures, that people take knowledge of them, that they have been with Jesus, whilst they themselves may thereby know that they are of God. In proportion as they live under the influence of Christianity, there is an intimate correspondence between their conduct and the doctrines, the promises, the precepts and examples exhibited in the word of God. Where no such fruits appear, there is no real godliness, however great your privileges, however high your pretensions, however respectable your character. A Christian unfruitful in good works is a solecism, an inconsistency that cannot be explained. I observe farther,

That visible good conduct affords the best evidence of our real character, both to ourselves and to those around us. Hearken to the testimony of Jesus Christ on this interesting subject: 'He that hath my commandments, 'and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: 'he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.'—'Hereby, saith the apostle John, we 'do know that we know him, if we keep his 'commandments,'

'commandments;' to which he adds, 'He 'that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his 'commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not 'in him.' The same apostle afterward affirms, that good actions give satisfying proof that we are the children of God: 'Let us not love in 'word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in 'truth; and hereby we know that we are of 'the truth, and shall assure our hearts before 'him. Let every man then prove his own 'work, so shall he have rejoicing in himself, 'and not in another.' Impartially review the exercises of your hearts, and your conduct in life. Seriously consider if you have had your conversation in the world by the grace of God, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and if you can thus vindicate the justice of your character as Christians. Diligently enquire if your actions proceed, not from self-love, and self-interest, but from the commanding principles of faith in Jesus Christ, of love to God, and sacred regard to his authority: if they are regulated by his perfect law—if you study, not so much to gratify your own inclinations and to please men, as to obtain the divine acceptance and approbation; if you are solicitous that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Know your own selves, and be not deceived by delusive appearances, whereby multitudes are imposed on, who imagine that they are rich, encreased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; whilst, in reality, they are wretched, poor, and blind and naked. Hypocrites and formalists

formalists in religion, seem to be something, when in truth they are nothing. Beware then lest you mistake worldly for godly sorrow, credulity for faith, presumption for hope, natural affection for divine love, external decency and regularity for holiness, and obedience to the will of God. There is a strong resemblance, though an eſſential difference, between the actions done by the upright servants of God, and such as are only nominal, and occasionally employed in attending to his commands, which ought to be well considered. The same laudible performances are attributed in scripture to persons of both characters. Do the children of the Most High fast, pray, and give alms? the Pharisees, whom our Lord doomed to manifold woes, frequently discharged these important duties: Was Abraham, the father of the faithful, celebrated for his faith? Simon Magus is also said to have believed: Did good king Josiah humble himself before God, when he heard his words? Ahab, who sold himself to work wickedness, did also humble himself before God, when he heard the word of the Lord sent by the prophet Elijah. Is it recorded to the honour of the man, according to God's own heart, that he fulfilled the will of God? it is also written concerning Jehu, the son of Nimshi, that he did well in executing what was right in God's eyes. The persons first mentioned were eminent men of God, who wrought that which was good and right before the Lord, and every

very work that they did in his service, they did it with all their heart; the latter were no more than titular servants, whose conduct in some particular instances was laudible, whilst in other respects they discovered the vanity of their pretensions, and the dissimulation with which they were chargeable. Attend then with the utmost care to those fruits by which you would judge of your spiritual state, and take heed that they be genuine, uniform, and persevering.

Our conduct before men likewise affords the clearest evidence of our real character, to those with whom we are connected as well as to ourselves. In the word of God is expressly prohibited that rash precipitate judgment, which without sufficient warrant and evidence, and contrary to the rules of candour and charity, we are too apt to pronounce on the words and actions of our brethren. Though this practice be reprobated in the strongest terms, yet we learn from many passages of scripture, that according to the rules there given, we may form a proper estimate of our neighbour's character. The rule given by Jesus Christ is plain and easy to be understood, 'By their 'fruits ye shall know them.' The nature of the tree cannot certainly be determined by the outward rhind, the leaves, or the blossoms that grow upon it, but by its fruit. Men cannot be easily distinguished by their high profession, by their fair appearances, their plausible expressions, or flattering promises; but by their

their actions, which spontaneously proceed from their hearts they may be known. The apostle John, therefore, agreeably to the doctrine of his divine Master, gives the following rule, whereby we ought to form our opinion of those with whom we converse, 'He that doeth good is of God, 'but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.' To the same purpose the apostle James thus speaks, 'Shew me thy faith without thy works, 'and I will shew thee my faith by my works.' People's actions afford, beyond all controversy, the best interpretation of their real sentiments, and the surest criterion whereby we can judge of the state of their minds. By their conduct we determine whether or not they are loyal subjects, and faithful to those who employ them in their service. We regard not the strongest professions of friendship and fidelity, if they are not verified by a corresponding behaviour: in the same manner we judge of the profession of friendship for the Lord Jesus Christ, the truth of which is best demonstrated by the assiduous imitation of his example, by becoming subjection to his authority, and sacred regard to his honour and interest. We ought to remember, however, that the fruits I have attempted circumstantially to describe, do not give unequivocal proofs, or absolute certainty of actual renovation, and admission into the family of God. We see but through a glass darkly, we know but in part, we are not acquainted with mens hearts, only a small portion of their conduct; perhaps the most ostensible,

tensible, perhaps the most culpable, falls under our cognizance. We cannot exactly ascertain how far persons may assume appearances of sanctity, who are notwithstanding destitute of good principles, nor can we positively determine what deficiencies in duty are incompatible with the power of godliness. Whilst therefore in judging ourselves we ought to be strict and jealous, least by too favourable a decision we injure our best interests—Our sentiments respecting our Brethren should be dictated by candour, formed with caution, expressed with modesty, under the influence of that charity which thinketh no evil, and hopeth all things. This leads me,

II. To shew that the rule of judgment here delivered by Jesus Christ is the most certain and the most equitable. For this purpose,

I observe, that every active principle is discovered and perfected by its operation. The growth, the spread, the leaves, and blossoms of the tree, do not so fully discover its nature as the good ripe fruit which it produces: The design is then compleated for which it was planted. In reference to this similitude the apostle James represents illicit desires as the seed sown in the heart; sin as the stock that arises from it; and death, the fruit whereby it is consummated. 'Lust (saith that great a-'postle) when it hath conceived, bringeth forth 'sin; and sin, when it is finished, or reached 'its end, bringeth forth death.' The graces of

of the Spirit, the divine principles which he implants in the hearts of his people, are perfected in the good fruits produced in their lives. In the language of the New Testament 'by 'works faith is made perfect, and whoso keep-'eth his word, in him, verily, is the love of 'God perfected.' It then produces its proper effect, its operation is compleated, the end of the principle is attained. Did the limits prescribed to this discourse permit, I might easily shew, that every divine grace which adorns the Christian life, such as filial reverence for God, repentance unto life, the precious faith of God's elect, supreme love to Jehovah, a lively hope, and holy joy in God through Jesus Christ, are always accompanied with good works. From what hath been said, we may safely conclude, that the rule furnished in my text is certain and satisfying.

I observe farther, that the holy scriptures frequently recommend this rule as the best by which we can decide. Other evidences are there mentioned by which we are directed to try ourselves, and to judge of our brethren; but all these are supposed or comprehended in the maxim I have been illustrating. A few quotations may serve to confirm the truth I have asserted. The important enquiry made in the xvth Psalm, by the devout Psalmist, in these words, 'Who shall abide in thy taber-'nacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' is renewed in the xxivth Psalm, where it is thus proposed: 'Who shall ascend into the hill of 'the

'the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy 'place?' To the former questions, the following answer is given: 'He that walketh up-'rightly, and worketh righteousness;' to the latter it is replied: 'He that hath clean hands, 'and a pure heart.' Jesus Christ declares, 'if we continue in his word, then are we his 'disciples indeed;' and the apostle John affirms, that 'in this the children of God are 'manifest, and the children of the devil; who-'soever doeth not righteousness is not of God, 'he that doeth righteousness is born of God.' These few passages selected from among many others, may serve at present to shew that the fruits of holiness and righteousness afford the most decisive evidence of the life and power of godliness. Would we then know if we have built upon the sure foundation God hath laid in Zion, let us carefully apply the rule with which we are furnished in my text. I only add,

That according to this rule of procedure; the final judgment of mankind shall be conducted, when our eternal state shall be irreversibly determined. Then God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; and every man shall be judged according to his works. In the description of the general judgment, given by the supreme Judge himself, in the xxvth chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ represents the decisive sentences by which men shall be consigned to everlasting punishment,

punishment, or adjudged to eternal life, as founded upon the clear proofs of their real character given by their actions. From these, with many other concurring testimonies which might be adduced, we conclude that the convincing proofs according to which our finals tate shall be fixed, are the best evidences whereby we can decide upon our real character. —The tree is known by its fruits.

My chief aim in treating this subject, is, that I may cut off, on the one hand, the delusive hopes of the hypocrite, which shall perish; that I may expose on the other, the frivolous pretensions of the profane, who profess to know God, but in works deny him; and that I may point out to the disciples of Christ those blessed fruits whereby they ought to be distinguished, and wherein they should abound to the glory of God, and their own consolation. Improve this doctrine, and what hath been said from it for these important purposes. I therefore summon you to appear before the tribunal of your consciences, that by the special evidence I have set before you, you may impartially examine into your spiritual state before God, and learn whether you are godly or ungodly, righteous or wicked. If, after diligent enquiry you still continue in uncertainty as to your real character, renew the scrutiny, and allow not a matter of such unspeakable moment, on which your hope and consolation much depend, to remain long in suspense. Beware of discussing the subject superficially, and of committing

committing a mistake in this momentous business, in which your best interests are involved. Imagine not that you are rich toward God, whilst in reality you are destitute of the true riches; that you are spiritual, and walk in the Spirit, whilst in truth you are carnal, and walk as men; that you love God, though in fact you are enemies to him in your minds, and by wicked works. When you prove and judge yourselves by the fruits I have delineated, and endeavour to know the state of your minds, afterward diligently improve the knowledge you have acquired for promoting your present holiness and comfort, and your eternal salvation.—God grant that what hath been said may conduce to your benefit and edification, and the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, to whom be praise, honour, and glory. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON X.

THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO CHRISTIANS.

JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.

THE time was now at hand when our blessed Redeemer was to leave this world, and go to the Father; that he might enjoy the glory which he had with him before the worlds were made. Having finished his labours and sufferings upon earth, he was about to enter into his rest, and to be crowned with glory and honour in heaven. Of his exaltation to the divine presence, his disciples were to feel the happy influence, and to reap the salutary fruits. No sooner, however, were they informed of his intended departure, than sorrow filled their hearts. From the period in which they first attended him, they always looked up to him as their gracious Master, and

and faithful guardian, who protected them from their enemies, who directed them in their perplexities, and often poured consolation into their dejected minds. The prospect of losing the company of such a valuable friend, must have distressed them beyond measure. To alleviate their sorrows, and dispel their fears, he acquaints them, that in his absence the Holy Ghost, whom the Father was to send, in consequence of his intercession, should supply his place, and afford them all necessary aid and encouragement. And, lest the disciples might suspect that the promised Comforter would continue with them only for a season, the compassionate Saviour declares, that the person of whom he spake should abide with them, not only during their residence on earth, but with the church until the consummation of all things. The reviving assurance contained in the text, was not intended to be confined to the apostles of our Lord, whose departure from this world was at no great distance, and who therefore needed not a comforter to abide with them for ever. It was designed for the encouragement of all his faithful followers in every age to the end of time, as is evident from the expression here used, 'That he may abide with you for e-'ver;' not for a few years only, as I have done, but as long as you remain on earth—and with all those also who shall believe on me through your word, and shall succeed you in your labours of love throughout all generations.

generations. In this view every true Christian is deeply interested in this precious promise; in this sense we ought to understand its import, and expect its accomplishment: 'And I 'will pray the Father, and he shall give you,' &c. Jesus Christ solemnly assures his disciples, that he would employ his interest with the Father, and effectually interceed with him to grant them another Comforter. This name, which is four times given to the Holy Spirit in the valedictory discourse, from whence I have taken my text, signifies one that instructs, one that pleads the cause of another, one that comforts. It emphatically describes the office of the Holy Ghost, who, as a teacher, reveals and inculcates the most important truths and duties; who, as an advocate, pleads the cause of God, by convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and the cause of men, by answering the accusations brought against them at the tribunal of conscience, the throne of grace, and the court of heaven; and who, as a comforter, supports and cheers the disconsolate minds of the faithful in all their tribulations. Our Saviour, who hath this designation also given him, and acted in each of these capacities, promises that after his departure this important office was to devolve on the Spirit of truth.

In the sequel of this discourse, I purpose, in dependance on divine aid, to point out and illustrate some of the salutary purposes for which the Comforter is given by the Father

in

in virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ to all who believe and obey him. It is not my design at present to treat of the agency of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of sinners, but of his subsequent operations, whereby the children of God are established in faith, in holiness and comfort, and conducted to the enjoyment of eternal life. He is given to enable them to sustain with dignity the high characters with which they are invested—to bear witness to their adoption into the family of God—to comfort them under all their afflictions—to seal them unto the day of redemption—to be the earnest of eternal inheritance, and—to abide with them for ever. By treating this subject we may through the divine blessing be assisted in understanding the distinguishing privileges that belong to christians, and in estimating our true character, which is of the utmost importance to the enjoyment of substantial comfort.

1. The Spirit of truth is given to you who are the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ to enable you to sustain with dignity the high characters with which you are invested. In this as in the other respects now mentioned, he acts as a Comforter. Ungodly and unrighteous conduct is the certain source of continual misery. Sin is the cause of all the disorders and disquietudes of the heart. In order to obtain deliverance from the distresses which it never fails to create, and to participate in the divine joys which flow from the Spirit of truth, we must

must be transformed by the renewing of our minds; that we may prove what is the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God. Unless we are strengthened with all might in the inner man for performing, with some measure of fidelity, the duties belonging to our several capacities and stations, we cannot expect the consolations of God. If we act not according to the rule of the holy Scriptures, we cannot reasonably hope that the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. A man who acts unworthily or who finds that the duties of his office are not suited to his abilities, can never find himself happy and at ease. If we act not agreeably to our obligations and circumstances as christians, it is impossible that we can enjoy inward tranquillity and serenity. Our state admits not of true comfort. Nor will the Holy Spirit reside with persons whose hearts have never been purified through the truth unto obedience. 'He that hath my commandments 'and keepeth them, saith Jesus Christ, he it 'is that loveth me; and he that loveth me 'shall be loved of my Father, and I will love 'him, and will manifest myself to him.' To enjoy the Comforter then promised in my text, with his consolations, we must maintain the character and conduct peculiar to the disciples of Jesus Christ.

For this purpose the Holy Spirit is given to consecrate us to the service of God, to give spiritual ability requisite for the performance

of

of it, and thus to introduce us into a state both pleasant and comfortable. I say, he consecrates us to the service of the Host High, wherein the truest enjoyment and satisfaction is experienced. The apostle Paul, writing of this distinguishing privilege to the saints at Corinth hath these remarkable words. 'He 'who hath anointed you is God.' The apostle John, speaking of the same subject, affirms, that 'the anointing which you have received 'abideth in you.' Those who were set apart to important offices under the Old Testament, were anointed with oil, and by that ceremony they entered upon the duties of their several functions. This ancient practice is generally acknowledged to have prefigured the unction of the Son of God, in consequence of which he is called Christ or the Anointed. By the oil of gladness poured upon him is meant, the Spirit of the Lord God, whereby he was perfectly qualified for performing the whole of his mediatorial work. Though in all things he hath the preheminence, yet, from the solemn transaction to which I just referred, we may learn the nature and effects of that anointing which Christians have of God in virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ. The beloved disciple attributes to it a kind of infinitude in these words, 'ye have an unc-'tion from the holy One, and ye know all 'things.' It doth not render you omniscient, which is the peculiar excellency of Jehovah; nor doth it acquaint you with the secret springs

springs of nature, or the occult arts and sciences. The knowledge imparted by the Spirit of truth to Christians is limited to spiritual objects revealed in the Scriptures, which are necessary to render us wise unto salvation. Among these the following must be included as holding a chief place, The only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, the law of the Lord which is perfect, and our own transgressions, the nature and necessity of that holiness without which we cannot enter the kingdom of God, together with the riches of divine grace exhibited in the gospel. Having the eyes of our understandings enlightened, we attain a certain comfortable practical acquaintance with these and other important interesting objects, and are happily disposed, under their salutary influence, to serve the living God.

To this I add, That the Comforter is sent to strengthen and furnish us for the performance of every good work. Hence the apostle of the Gentiles acknowledges in his own name, and that of his Brethren in Christ, 'God hath not given us the Spirit of 'fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound 'mind.' Though the Father is the source from which this inestimable blessing primarily flows, yet it is conveyed by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who, from time to time, affords Christians renewed supplies of grace, by means of which they oppose corruption, they sustain affliction, they perform duty, and hold on to the end in the good ways of the Lord.

Lord. How animating, in the most enfeebled and dejected state, to experience that our sufficiency cometh from God; that we are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; that we are enabled to delight ourselves in the Lord, who will give us the desires of our hearts; and to go through the whole labour of love, which of all employments is the most pleasant and the most honourable! In this manner we are exalted to conformity to Jesus Christ, we are carried forward in the paths of righteousness, we surmount difficulties, and triumph over enemies.—Convinced of the high importance of this noble prerogative, and solicitous to possess it, let us avoid whatever might grieve the Holy Spirit; let us walk under his influence; let us submit ourselves to his guidance; let us depend on his assistance, and let us pray fervently for the continuance of his presence.

2. The Comforter is given to bear witness to our adoption into the family of God. 'The 'Spirit itself (saith the apostle Paul) beareth 'witness with our Spirit that we are the chil-'dren of God; and if children then heirs, heirs 'of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.' Many unhappy consequences have arisen from wrong apprehensions concerning the witness of the Holy Spirit; and therefore we ought to investigate the subject with the utmost attention and impartiality. Some people have imagined that it consists in certain inward suggestions, conveyed into the mind, perhaps by

by means of a passage of Scripture, that the person is beloved of God, that his sins are pardoned, and that he is an heir of everlasting life. This explanation appears to me unscriptural, and liable to many insuperable objections. The Holy Spirit bears witness with the Spirit of God's children in a more clear and decisive manner than hath been now mentioned. The inspired writer in the words I have quoted plainly intends by our Spirit, to signify our hearts, which when they condemn us not, we have confidence toward God, or our consciences, whose testimony is our rejoicing, when they attest that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have our conversation in the world. By the Spirit itself, he doubtless means the Holy Ghost, who by shedding abroad the love of God into our hearts, and endowing us with filial affection to our Heavenly Father, corroborates the testimony of our own hearts relative to our spiritual state and our admission into the family of the Lord God Almighty. To give evidence with our Spirit he is pleased to work in us those divine graces and holy dispositions, which constitute the distinguishing characteristics of the children of the most High; hence they are denominated the fruits of the Spirit. He assists in discerning the blessed effects of his operation on our hearts, and opens our eyes to see our intimate connection with the fountain of life

life, which formerly was unobserved.——The comfortable truth to which he bears witness is, that we are the children of God, that by faith in Jesus Christ, and the renovation of our natures, we are advanced to the most honourable and intimate relation to God. With this view the apostle asserts, in the verse preceding the one that I cited, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but 'we have received the spirit of adoption;' that noble and ingenuous disposition, which is suited to the endearing relation in which we stand to God, whereby we cry, Father, and approach him with filial confidence, as our kind parent, and all-sufficient friend. Thus doth the Spirit of truth teach to decide with comfort respecting our spiritual state, and to determine, under his divine influence, in our own favour, in consequence whereof we may adopt with triumph the words of the apostle John, which demand peculiar attention. 'He 'that believeth on the Son of God, hath the 'witness in himself.' After what hath been said on this article, it will not be difficult to ascertain what is meant by the witness which he that believeth on Jesus Christ carries in his own breast. It consists, I apprehend, in that purity of heart, and those gracious dispositions of mind, of which every true Christian is possessed by the power of divine grace, who hath put off the old man with his corrupt affections, and put on the new man which is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true

true holiness. It comprises that sacred peace and desireable serenity established in the soul by the Holy Spirit, resulting from the Christian's confidence toward God through Jesus Christ, and the well-grounded hope of his interest in the divine favour and love. It comprehends also blessed conquest over this present evil world, whose fascinating charms and awful terrors prove hostile to our best interests, accompanied with joyful aspirations after a glorious immortality in the everlasting kingdom of God. When restored to the amiable image of our Creator, formed to the love and practice of universal obedience to his will, blessed with victory over this world, and the joyful prospect of eternal glory, which diffuses a holy tranquillity through the mind; we have the witness in ourselves, that God hath given to us everlasting life. This evidence silences all the objections urged to this comfortable truth, and fortifies the Christian against the assaults that are made upon his peace of mind, and hope in God. Such, my brethren, if I mistake not, is the evidence of the Holy Spirit, who is given to bear witness with the spirits of Christians, that they are the children of the Most High.

3. The Spirit of truth is given to comfort them under all their afflictions. In reference to this part of his office, he is emphatically denominated the Comforter; and those to whom he imparts his consolations are said to walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Man

is

is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Christians are peculiarly liable to afflictions, disquietudes and sorrows, which proceed from various sources. Personal distress, domestic crosses, the loss of reputation, friends, and property, the temptations of the evil one, the power of sin, and the ensnaring influence of the world, combine to disturb and injure them. One chief subject of enquiry which hath engrossed the attention of mankind, in all ages, is from whence they may obtain relief and support under the calamities to which they must unavoidably submit. Philosophers of old, among the heathen, discovered no better comforts which they could administer to their disciples than those which arise from afflictions being the common lot of humanity, that they are such only in the opinion of those who sustain them, that troubles are inevitable, and that human life is very short. The blessed fountain of consolation set open to Christians in my text, poured not its refreshing streams into their hearts, and seems to have been hid from their eyes. 'The world neither knoweth the Spirit of truth, nor can receive him.' Those, and those only, who have experienced the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, participate of his divine consolations. Other operations he must perform, prior to his acting as our Comforter, we must be regenerated and restored to favour before we can be practically acquainted with his blessed agency in this amiable character.

Comfort

Comfort, you know, supports the mind when it is enfeebled, it raises the spirits when dejected, it preserves from fainting in the evil day, when distressed with doubts and fears, afflictions and sorrows. It is the stay and strength of the heart under the troubles that we fear and feel, it imparts that sacred peace and joy which are their portion whose praise is not of men but of God. It springs from an agreeable sense of the divine love shed abroad into the soul, and the lively hope of future promised glory; though it doth not remove calamities and griefs, yet greatly alleviates them, and disposes to bear them with composure, dignity and resignation. It is sometimes communicated by means of the providence of God, who seasonably and remarkably interposes for our relief, by rendering unexpected events subservient to our benefit, by raising up those to befriend us who prove instrumental in accomplishing our deliverance. It is sometimes conveyed through the medium of the word of God, which was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort might have hope. In the scriptures the sacred sources are disclosed from whence divine consolation proceeds. They contain repeated comfortable assurances, that God's paternal care extends to his peculiar people, and that their afflictions proceed from his fatherly affection and tender concern for their welfare: 'Whom the Lord loveth he 'chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom

'he receiveth.' They give the strongest security of his unchangeable love, amid all the variety that may occur in their external situation. They are taught in the most adverse condition, to say, 'Although the fig tree 'should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in 'the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, 'and the fields shall yield no meat, though the 'flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there 'shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will we re-'joice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our 'salvation.' They instruct us, that God in wisdom and mercy appoints all their afflictions, and adjusts every circumstance in their lot; that sin is the procuring cause to which they are indebted for all their troubles, which are intended, either to prevent or remove some spiritual distemper, and to promote the most salutary purposes. They exhibit illustrious examples of those who nobly sustained the greatest calamities whom we are invited to imitate. Take, my Brethren, the prophets of the Lord, who have spoken the word of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. They give the most reviving promises of the plentiful supply of our necessities, of support under trouble, of the seasonable alleviation and removal of distress, of the forgiveness of sins, and eternal glory, when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. They direct how afflictions ought to be endured, so as fears and sorrows may be moderated, cares and anxieties restrained, graces and

happiness

happiness improved, and afterwards the peaceable fruits of righteousness greatly encreased. These, and other important lessons, which the Spirit of truth hath dictated in the scriptures on this interesting subject, he seasonably recalls to remembrance; he opens the eyes of the understanding, to perceive their import, and effectually applies them to the heart. When acting as the Comforter of the disciples of Jesus Christ, he enables us to discern the divine love that directed adverse dispensations, the tender compassion which mitigated them, and the gracious purposes they are intended to promote. He accompanies outward instructions with inward illumination, to assist us in understanding the loving-kindness of the Lord; he conveys fresh supplies of spiritual wisdom, strength, and joy, whereby we perform with alacrity and pleasure the various duties incumbent upon us, and endure the manifold afflictions with which we are visited, with patience, resignation and fortitude, in the prospect of glory, honour, and immortality.--Plead earnestly with God, that he would grant you this inestimable privilege; view it as a choice fruit of the cross, and exaltation of Jesus Christ; and in the lively hope of enjoying it, attend diligently on all the instituted means of grace.

4. The Spirit of truth is given to seal true Christians unto the day of redemption. He is repeatedly spoken of in scripture as given for this very purpose: 'In whom also (saith

'the apostle of the Gentiles) after that ye be-
'lieved, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit
'of promise,' Eph. i. 13. And he directs the faithful in Christ Jesus to beware of vexing this divine person, reminding them of the gracious design of his operation: 'Grieve not
'the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are seal-
'ed unto the day of redemption.' A seal you know, hath commonly some image, or character engraven upon it, which it communicates to the object on which it is impressed. In like manner, the seal of the Holy Spirit conveys the divine resemblance to those on whom it is stamped. Seals are used for various purposes: They are affixed to important written transactions, in order to authenticate them, to give them greater validity, and to afford the stronger security to all concerned. Hence we read, that Jeremiah the prophet, having bought a field in Anathoth, of Hananiel his uncle's son, witnesses were called, he weighed the purchase money to his friend, and the deed of conveyance was subscribed and sealed, according to the law and custom. In reference to this ancient practice, the Holy Spirit is said to have appended his seal to the record and covenant of God, by endowing the first disciples of Jesus Christ with miraculous powers, and by imparting to his followers in every age, faith, holiness, and consolation, which all unite in confirming the testimony of God. At present I speak not of the seal whereby the Holy Spirit hath ratified and established

tablished the word of God; but of that seal, which being impressed upon the hearts of Christians, their individual interest in the favour of God, and the heavenly inheritance is ascertained, and their minds are strengthened and comforted.—Seals are applied in order to preserve in security and safety the treasure that we highly value from fraud and violence, that it be not hurt or lost amid the dangers to which it may be exposed. Hence we read in the Revelation, that the people who are there described by locusts, were prohibited from hurting those who have the seal of God in their foreheads, and by this discriminating mark are specified as objects of divine protection, from desolating calamities. By divine appointment a certain token was affixed to the houses of the Israelites, whose first born were to be exempted from destruction by the angel who went through the land of Egypt. And a mark was put on the foreheads of them that sighed and cried for the abominations done in Jerusalem, in consequence of which, they were delivered from the wrath poured out on that city. For the same purpose Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit, who, by conveying to them the image of God, gives them the most inviolable security that they shall be kept in perfect safety, notwithstanding the hostile assaults of their enemies, and the manifold dangers with which they are threatened.—Seals are likewise used as a distinguishing mark whereby property is ascer-

tained. Princes and great men have peculiar images and characters stampt upon their plate, jewels, and other valuable articles, which shew to whom they belong. When the tribute-money was brought to Jesus Christ, he asked at the Pharisees, Whose is this image and inscription? they replied, Cesar's: on which he delivered these memorable words: 'Render un-'to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto 'God the things that are God's.' In allusion probably to this custom, the church is introduced in the Song of Songs, with this request to Jesus Christ, 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, and 'as a seal upon thine arm:' Let thy name and resemblance be deeply impressed on my mind, and let me have pleasing proofs that thou hast continual remembrance of me. The saints are the Jewels of Jesus Christ, on whom he impresses his beautiful image by the Holy Spirit, and by this distinguishing mark he claims them as his peculiar property, he appropriates them to his service, and shews that they are the objects of his gracious regard.—By this truly honourable distinction, which flows to Christians from the love of God, and the mediation of Jesus Christ, they resemble the first born among many brethren, to whom God hath predestinated them to be conformed. Him God the Father sealed. He invested him with sacred authority, for the execution of his office; he gave evidence that he would preserve him in safety,

whilst

whilst employed in the arduous work of our redemption, he acknowledged him to be his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. In like manner the Holy Spirit seals the faithful in Christ Jesus, whom God hath adopted into his family, and entered into a new and most endearing relation to himself, and the household of faith. That they may discharge with fidelity the duties resulting from their new relations, that they may act on proper principles, that they may sustain with dignity the afflictions which befal them, and finish the work given them to do; God is pleased to furnish them with the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. By conferring this important benefit, God testifies that they are his peculiar treasure; he assures them of his omnipotent protection; he affords them comfortable proof of his tender affection, and the powerful efficacy of his grace, whereby they are formed into his likeness. Thus are they sealed unto the day of redemption, when, being completely delivered from temptation and sin, from affliction, sorrow, and death; they shall be invested in the everlasting possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

5. The Comforter is given to be the earnest of eternal inheritance. The apostle Paul repeatedly affirms, that he is conferred on the saints for this very purpose. 'God,' saith that apostle, 'hath given the earnest of the Spirit 'in our hearts,' 2 Cor. i. 22. In the fifth

chapter of the same epistle he thus writes, 'Now he that hath wrought us for the self-'same thing is God, who hath also given to 'us the earnest of the Spirit.' And he informs the faithful in Christ Jesus, that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory, Eph. i. 14. What is called the earnest, is commonly part of the sum contracted, given by one party to the other, in order to confirm some important transaction, and to be the pledge or security, that the whole stipulated engagements shall be fulfilled in due time. In allusion to this well known practice, the God of all grace gives to his faithful servants the earnest of the Spirit, consisting of those divine graces that furnish them for the various services assigned them, which are also the first principles and sure pledges of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It consists not in knowledge that puffeth up, nor in prophecies and tongues that fail, and cannot give security to their possessors of interest in God's everlasting kingdom; but in charity and holiness, which never fail to give pleasing anticipations of celestial bliss, and delightful prelibations of that promised felicity, in which love shall reign for ever in full perfection. This inestimable benefit our heavenly Father grants to his children, to assure them of his unchangeable love, to give them satisfying security of the certain accomplish-

ment

ment of his faithful promises, and to excite in them longing expectation for the full enjoyment of his presence and glory This precious blessing is the source of all that spiritual light and life, beauty and joy, which are the agreeable foretastes of heaven, and the sure prelude of that fulness of joy, and those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

By our revolt from God, we lost the character and the inheritance of the sons of the Most High; divine justice seized on the forfeiture, and, by an irrevocable grant, invested the whole in the hands of God's own Son, who was constituted heir and Lord of all things. That the inheritance might be restored to us in a way honourable to God, his only begotten Son redeemed it from the forfeiture, and conveys it to them that believe and obey him, by a new right of possession, in consequence of having obtained it for us by the costly price of his own blood. In executing this arduous work, he acted in the capacity of trustee (if I may use the expression) to all who are joint-heirs of God with him, whose concerns were committed into his hands. And now, that we may acquire a valid right to a share of this redeemed inheritance, we must be so intimately united to Jesus Christ, as to be one Spirit with him, and receive the earnest of the Holy Spirit, which conveys the strongest assurance, that in due time we shall be admitted to full pos-

session. Amid the powerful temptations with which we have to conflict, the various trials we must sustain, and the certain prospect of dissolution, this noble prerogative gives pleasing security of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The first fruits we now taste, serve to quicken ardent desires after the harvest of eternal glory, when we shall gather fruit unto life everlasting. This earnest is the blessing of blessings comprised in the precious promise of Jesus Christ, from which I am discoursing. This is the invaluable legacy he hath bequeathed to all his disciples, in the new and better testament. This he communicates to us for the gracious purposes of which you have now heard, to render our condition safe and comfortable, and to give us the certain pledge of the future glorious inheritance. As no similitude could fully represent the surpassing excellence of the promised benefit, we are taught to contemplate it in the several instructive lights in which it hath been exhibited.

6. The Spirit of truth is given to true Christians, that he may abide with them for ever. This is plainly intimated in my text, and in other passages of scripture. Under the Old Testament, God promised to the church, by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. 26. 'I 'will put my Spirit within you, and cause you 'to walk in my statutes and judgments, and 'do them.' In the New Testament, Christians are instructed that they are temples of the

the Holy Ghost, as God hath said, 'I will 'dwell in them and walk in them, and I will 'be their God, and they shall be my people.' And in the words following the subject of this discourse, our blessed Saviour thus speaks to his disciples, 'Ye know him, for he dwelleth 'with you, and shall be in you.' The residence of the Spirit of Truth in the children of God thus explicitly asserted in the scriptures, is one of those sublime truths which, though we cannot fully explain, we ought firmly to believe, on the testimony of Him who is faithful and true. We cannot develope the union that connects together our souls and bodies, nor shew how they operate on each other; but would it not be folly in the extreme to deny the fact, and to call in question the truth of our existence. Nor would it be less foolish and absurd to refuse to credit the testimony of God on the subject before us, because we cannot unfold the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear him. This topic, on which the thoughts of many hearts have been employed, requires to be treated with great care and delicacy. The promise now before us, which assures you who are the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, that the Comforter shall abide with you for ever, on the one hand, imports more than that he will be with you by his essential omnipresence, whereby he filleth all things, which is a necessary perfection of the divine nature. It includes more, I apprehend, than his working in you that which is well pleasing in God's

God's sight, and continuing with you his operations and their effects, which he can easily do, though he did not afford you his special presence so as to dwell in you. On the other hand, we must not imagine that the promise of the perpetual residence of the Holy Spirit in the faithful, is intended to signify that you are personally united to him, so as to become one with him, as you are with Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding you are made partakers by him of the Divine nature, and formed, by his sacred agency, into the blessed image of God, you must remember that he is your Creator, and that you are his workmanship; that he is the Spirit of life, and that you are only animated by his quickening power. In considering the peculiar residence of the Comforter, in the disciples of the Son of God, nothing in the least derogatory to this divine person may be attributed to him. Did your time permit, I should have enlarged with pleasure on this high privilege; as the little attention paid to it is one chief cause of the small proficiency you make in the practice of goodness. Along with the grand discoveries and glorious prospects opened in the gospel, there comes a powerful agency of God working in them that believe, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do the bulk even of serious Christians seem persuaded that the Holy Ghost constantly resides in their souls, presiding over their thoughts, stimulating their affections, influencing their wills, and directing their actions? If they did, they would

would behave in another manner than they commonly do. What might not you attempt in the service of God, were you firmly convinced that you acted under the direction and influence of a Divine Person abiding with you, who is greater than he that is in the world? The apostles Peter and John were no more able to cure a man that was born lame, than you are to remove the distortion of your souls; but persuaded of Divine power going along with them, they attempted it with success. Had you, my hearers, the same happy conviction, you would make no difficulty to engage in the most arduous services; deeply sensible, that the agency of the Holy Ghost does not supercede your own efforts, or prevent the pain attending the struggle; but supports and animates you with the prospect of success and victory.

Having thus pointed out and illustrated some of the benevolent purposes for which the Comforter is given to Christians by the Father, in virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ; let me call upon you to contemplate, with admiration and gratitude, the wonderful love of the Father, in not only giving his only begotten Son to die for us; but also his Holy Spirit, to be our Sanctifier and Comforter. Behold the tender care of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the happiness and comfort of his disciples, in obtaining for them, during his absence, the Spirit of Truth to abide with them continually, to solace their minds, and to consummate their salvation; and the astonishing

nishing condescension of the Holy Ghost, who vouchsafes to dwell in them for ever, and in various ways, to console their hearts during their residence on earth. What returns of dutiful obedience and submission doth such unspeakable favour and kindness justly demand. Let me call upon you who have received this precious benefit, faithfully to improve it for all those practical purposes which it is well suited to promote, that henceforth you may walk in the Spirit, and abound with all his blessed fruits. Let me also beseech you who have not hitherto experienced his benign influence, to pray earnestly that God may confer upon you the Holy Spirit, which is the sum of all other spiritual blessings, and the way to enjoy them in highest perfection. Attend diligently to the glorious gospel, which is the ministration of the Spirit, the mean of conveying him into the hearts of men, and of imparting to them larger measures of his grace. Beware of vexing and grieving him, by indulging in any known sin, by neglecting the ordinances of divine institution, and omitting to perform any commanded duty. Walk in the fear of the Lord, would you enjoy the comfort of the Holy Ghost.—Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. And to God be honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XI.

THE DUTIES PECULIAR TO THE SEVERAL AGES OF CHRISTIANS.

1 JOHN ii. 13.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning; I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one; I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

A GREAT diversity is conspicuous among mankind, in their characters, employments, conditions, and ages. Some are distinguished by their eminent goodness; others by their profligate wickedness. Some display an extensive acquaintance with the arts and sciences; others are remarkable for their knowledge only of a particular business. Some are elevated to high rank, and enjoy great opulence; others live in obscurity, and are depressed with poverty. Some have reached the more advanced stages of life, and justly merit the appellation of fathers; others are in the vigour of youth, possessed of comeliness, strength

strength, and vivacity; besides whom, there are vast numbers of little children, whose knowledge is confined to the few surrounding objects which engage their attention. No less remarkable is the diversity that subsists among professing Christians, in the church of the living God. In this large society there are intermixed with those who fear and serve the Lord, many who profess to know God, but in works deny him. There are pastors and teachers, for perfecting the saints, for edifying the body of Christ, and those who by their means are instructed and built up in holiness and comfort unto eternal life. There are those who have attained the most desirable prerogatives, and are become rich in faith and in good works; and those who are poor and miserable, blind and naked; some of whom imagine, that they are rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing. In respect of age, there are among Christians great variety, in regard of their progress in the divine life, in stature, strength, and usefulness. Some are young, feeble, timid, and unskilful in the word of righteousness; who having been admitted but lately into the family of God, require the most simple food to sustain and nourish them. Others are arrived at maturity, having made considerable advances toward the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, whose senses are exercised to discern both good and evil, who are lively, vigorous, and active in the service of God. There are also

also old disciples, who by the large experience and confirmed stability they have acquired in the ways of God, and who, by increasing exemplary piety and holiness, have attained the venerable character of fathers. To Christians in these several stages of the spiritual life, the apostle John directs the words I have read as the subject of discourse. And from them I shall take occasion to address particularly fathers, young men, and children, in the sequel of this discourse.

You may easily perceive, from what I have said, that the different classes of persons to which I am to speak, are not to measure your ages from the time in which ye were born into this world; but from the important period wherein ye were entered among the sons of God, and became members of the household of faith. According to this standard Christians are denominated in scripture. The apostle Paul speaks of the Corinthians who were grown up in years, as babes in Christ, and those who are yet in the days of their youth; like Jeremiah and Timothy, may be ranked among the senior order of the servants of God. I shall take it for granted at present, that ye really are what ye profess; and upon this supposition, which is highly honourable to you, I am going to shew you how ye ought to conduct yourselves, that ye may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and act as becometh the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I.

I. To you, fathers, who are far advanced in the divine life, I bow with becoming respect. I congratulate my aged friends, on the long experience ye have had that the Lord is gracious, that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that they who wait on the Lord renew their strength. Blessed are your hoary heads, that are found in the way of righteousness, which to you are crowns of glory. In the good warfare wherein ye have been engaged under the conduct of the Leader and Commander of the people, ye have happily escaped many dangers that have proved fatal to multitudes. Though ye may have received some painful wounds, the scars of which are yet visible, they were tenderly bound up by the Captain of Salvation, who always brought you off the field victorious. In your journey toward the heavenly and better country, when ready to faint, the everlasting God the Lord hath furnished you with all might in the inner man, in consequence whereof you have gone from strength to strength, your way hath been made perfect, and ye have surmounted many difficulties. Inured to the practice of godliness, and accustomed to trials of faith and patience, through the grace of the Most High ye perform with facility and pleasure, the exercises of obedience, and sustain, with dignity and fortitude, the afflictions assigned you by the Lord of heaven and earth. Your knowledge of the truths and ways of God is become more extensive and

and practical than in the days of youth; your faith in the providence and promises of God, more lively and vigorous; your love to God and the Redeemer, stronger and more ardent; your trust in the righteousness and grace of Jesus Christ more firm and established; and your resignation more tranquil and unlimited. Ye are formed into a more serene and heavenly temper than in time past. Your devotion is more steady and sublime; your communion with God more frequent and pleasant; your obedience to the perfect law of liberty more delightful and constant, and your progress is now become considerable in the way of holiness, that leadeth to the city of the living God. Your lot may be often checker'd with changes that alternately succeed one another. Now ye may be weak, then ye may be strong; now ye may be troubled, anon ye may be exalted to prosperity; now ye may enjoy the light of God's countenance, soon he may hide his face from you. Present security and peace may, ere long, be followed by disquietude; ye may be tossed with tempests, and not comforted. But though your circumstances and temper may be frequently varying; amidst all the adversity with which your life is variegated, ye faint not; though your outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day, and your salvation is nearer than when ye believed.

To you, fathers, the apostle John saith he wrote, and to you I direct my discourse, because

because ye have known him that is from the beginning. Jesus Christ is doubtless the person intended by this description, which is very similar to the language which he elsewhere uses, when speaking of the Son of God: 'In 'the beginning was the Word, and the Word 'was with God, and the Word was God, the 'same was in the beginning with God.' And in the first verse of this epistle, from which I have taken my text, he is introduced in similar terms. He was from the beginning, not merely from the commencement of the gospel economy, in which sense the expression seems to be used by the evangelist Luke, chap. i. 2. or from the promulgation of the law, which appears to be the meaning of what is said at the 7th verse of this chapter, or from the time wherein God created the heavens and the earth, mentioned Gen. i. 1. The words are also employed in scripture, to denote unmeasurable eternity, as in Prov. viii. 22. where the Wisdom of God thus speaks, 'The Lord possessed me in the be-'ginning of his way, before his works of old.' In this sense I understand the phrase in my text, which intimates the eternal existence of the Son of God, whose going forth have been of old, from everlasting, and who enjoyed glory with the Father before the worlds were made. In the fulness of time he was manifest in the flesh, he became obedient for us unto the death of the cross, and having borne our sins and carried our sorrows, he re-assumed

ed his original glory far above all heavens. This is the illustrious worthy personage with whom ye have long maintained an intimate growing acquaintance, compared to whom, all created objects lately had a beginning, and will soon wither and decay like fading flowers. The pleasing contemplation of his divine character and tender compassion fail not, I hope, to attract your supreme affection, and to excite your firm confidence, amidst all the temptations, the enemies and dangers with which ye encounter. He is from the beginning the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.

Of this glorious person, ye old disciples have possessed for many years an experimental, sanctifying, practical, improving knowledge. Ye are become well acquainted with his infinite dignity, his profound humiliation, his amiable condescension, his important offices, his complicated sufferings, his atoning sacrifice, and subsequent glory. Ye have had comfortable experience of his forgiving mercy, his incomparable grace, his everlasting faithfulness and love that passeth knowledge. Ye confide solely in his righteousness, grace, and ability to save you to the uttermost, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Ye sincerely love him as your best friend, who loved you, and gave himself for you. Knowing in whom ye have believed, ye are persuaded, that he is able to keep that which ye have committed unto him against that day,

day, to which ye look forward with hope and joy. Convinced that actions are the best interpreters of our sentiments, and that in the scriptures of truth knowledge is estimated by its practical influence; ye have uniformly demonstrated the reality of your intimate acquaintance with the blessed Redeemer, by unlimited subjection to his instructions, righteousness, and authority; and by growing conformity to his perfect example. Hereby ye know, that ye know him in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings, by being made conformable unto his death, and by keeping his commandments. Proficiency in this desireable knowledge of the Son of God, is in a peculiar manner your happy attainment who are fathers.

Permit me, my aged, and much respected friends, to give you a few cautions, to which I request your candid attention. Jesus Christ, in his discourses, often warned his hearers, and even his disciples, of the evils and dangers they ought to avoid; and in this instance a servant of Jesus Christ should undoubtedly imitate his master. Beware of deceiving yourselves by thinking that ye are something when ye are nothing. With what criminal negligence are they chargeable, to what imminent danger are they exposed, who, like the church of Laodicea, grossly mistake their spiritual condition. Ye are loth to be imposed on by another person, even in a trivial matter; how attentive then ought ye to be, least

least you deceive yourselves with respect to your eternal salvation. Frequently then prove your own works; re-consider the principles, the motives, the ends of your actions, and the temper of mind with which every duty is performed. Repeatedly compare your hearts and lives with the word of God, and impartially examine them by that standard, in order to know the worst of your state, and to obtain sufficient ground to conclude, that your inward dispositions and outward actions are agreeable to the rule of scripture. In steering your course through the remaining part of the voyage of life, take heed lest you strike on those dangerous rocks on which many have been dashed, and suffered shipwreck. Avoid with unremitting solicitude those fatal errors, those natural propensities, delusive temptations, and sinful practices, whereby ye may fall from your own stedfastness. Guard against impatience and fretfulness, under the manifold infirmities and disappointments of life, and cultivate, through the grace of God, a sweet, contented, resigned temper, in all the various circumstances through which divine providence may conduct you. Beware of moroseness and peevishness, and those malevolent dispositions, which gather strength from the decay of natural spirits, and encreasing bodily disorders. If indulged, they will grieve the Spirit of God, they will add to your own uneasiness, and render you contemptible in the view of those who ought to esteem

and

and serve you. Take heed that you do not become covetous and avaricious, so as to grudge yourselves, and those who depend upon you, the liberal use of the good things of this life. Venture to partake of those comforts which are suited to your situation in life; cheerfully enjoy the good things ye possess, and generously impart them to others. Of all people on earth, aged Christians ought to be least attached to this present world, in which they are only strangers, and from which they must soon take their departure. Permit me also to warn you against predominant selfishness, and insensibility to the distresses of your brethren, which too frequently manifest their pernicious influence over old persons, and renders them uncomfortable, and in a great measure useless in society. Having cautioned you against some of the evils to which you are peculiarly liable,

Suffer me to call upon you, my esteemed fathers, to act up to the venerable character you sustain. That ye may adorn your holy profession, ye must not only shun that which is evil, but assiduously follow that which is good. Every age, and every station hath its distinct propriety of conduct, which ought to be well understood, and carefully maintained by all who would acquit themselves as becometh the disciples of Jesus Christ. The strictest attention to this circumstance will be justly expected from those who ought to be distinguished by superiority of judgment, prudence,

dence, and progress in holiness. To attain this pre-eminence, frequently and seriously review your past conduct, recollect the errors into which you have fallen, the sins you have committed, the mercies you have received, and the deliverances you have obtained. Attentively think over your own history; mark the seasonable interpositions of Providence in your behalf; weigh the sacred obligations that you have fulfilled, and those which you have transgressed. This exercise properly performed, through the divine blessing, may promote humility, excite admiration of the patience, the mercy and grace of God, and furnish abundant matter for prayer and thanksgiving. Fill up your vacant hours with the duties of devotion, which are excellently adapted to the tranquil state at which I hope ye are happily arrived. Labour to detach your hearts from the world that ye are soon to leave, and to get them better formed, through Sanctification of the Spirit, for that glorious eternal state of which ye have the near prospect. Often anticipate the felicities and joys of the celestial world into which ere long ye shall be received, that ye may be ever with the Lord. In the mean time endeavour to impress on the minds of the young just sentiments of this present life; employ all your influence, and exert all your abilities, in reclaiming them from their evil ways, in warning the giddy and thoughtless, in giving salutary advice to the inconsiderate,

and inexperienced, inculcating upon them the high importance of that salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Be examples of the believers in word and conversation, in charity, in Spirit, in faith, in purity; until he come to call you hence who will come and not tarry. Thus go on in strength of God the Lord, making mention of his righteousness and his only, still growing and flourishing in the courts of our God, still bringing forth fruit in old age.

And now, my dearly beloved in the Lord, I bid you Farewell. May you close your eyes in peace, fall asleep in Jesus, and have an abundant entrance ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And when the time of your departure is at hand, may the Lord on whom you have believed, dispose you to adopt the triumphant language of the apostle Paul, 'I have finished my course—'henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of 'righteousness which the Lord the righteous 'judge shall give me at that day,' &c. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Secondly, I next proceed to direct my discourse to young men, to middle aged Christians, who are in the bloom and vigour of the divine life. A learned Commentator observes that the word translated *young men*, denotes those who have attained that time of life wherein persons enlist to be soldiers, and engage in the military business, and that it is here

here used to describe those who are arrived at that period in the Christian life, wherein they are called to strenuous exertion in the spiritual warfare, and to contend with the enemies who war against their souls. In your present station ye rank betwixt venerable fathers, who have attained to maturity and large experience in the ways of God, and those who have not yet got above the weakness and timidity of little children. Though ye are much inferior to the former, who have been long engaged in the good fight of faith, ye have been longer members of the family of God than the latter. Ever since ye passed from death to life, and have known the grace of God in truth, ye have grown up in all things to Christ the head, and have increased with the increase of God. In this stage of progress toward the measure of the stature of perfect men in Jesus Christ, your passions are strong, your imaginations lively, your memories retentive; ye are apt to be rash in the execution of the plans ye adopt, to rush into danger, and to put your strength and fortitude unnecessarily to the trial. Intemperance, voluptuousness, ambition, with other corrupt dispositions, retain too much of their former influence, and prompt you occasionally to excess in gaiety, and improper indulgences. The business and cares of the world are ready to occupy your minds too much, and to divert your attention from the more important concerns of salvation.

In prosperity, diligence and fervour in serving the Lord is omitted; in adversity, distrust and despondency arise in the mind; and in the hour of temptation, ye are easily surprised by unexpected assaults and dangers. Apt to be vain of your abilities and performances, ye are peculiarly in danger of being seduced by the love of applause, and of being successfully attacked by your great adversary, the prince of darkness. Though more skilful in the word of righteousness, and in managing the spiritual weapons of your warfare, than those who are only learning the first principles of the oracles of God, ye are yet far from having made progress equal to old disciples, who have sat long at the feet of our Divine Master, and are become grey headed in his service.—These are a few traits in the character of the young men to whom the apostle John says that he wrote, for the reasons which now induce me, with affection and solicitude, to address you who are of this description.

The first reason mentioned in the verse following my text is, 'because ye are strong.' Bodily strength, with a sound, vigorous constitution, which is the glory of young men, is not chiefly intended in this expression; but that spiritual might in the inner man, which God often communicates, according to the riches of his glory, to them whose bodies are feeble, and whose health is much impaired. By this strength which comes from the Spirit of power, young Christians can do all things.

They

They are furnished for the performance of every good work; they are enabled successfully to repel the temptations whereby they are assaulted, and nobly to sustain the afflictions wherewith they are visited. Strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness, ye will take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, as did the apostle of the Gentiles; for when ye are weak, then ye are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Though in yourselves insufficient so much as to think any good thing, your strength and security lies in Jesus Christ, from whose fulness ye may receive abundant succour in every time of need. By this animating truth I am encouraged to point out your duty, and to call upon you to distinguish yourselves as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

To young men the beloved disciple wrote, and I now speak, for another reason, namely, 'because the word of God abideth in you.' With what a precious treasure are ye entrusted! In the word of God is contained that spiritual provision which strengthens and gladdens the heart, which is more to be desired than thousands of gold and silver, that is sweeter than honey from the honey comb. The sublime doctrines therein revealed, ye cordially receive as worthy of all acceptation, and lay them up in your hearts that you of-

fend not against God. The perfect law of liber y therein promulgated, you take for a light unto your feet and a lamp unto your goings. The exceeding great and precious promises therein recorded, ye firmly believe, and on them ye rely as the foundation of your hope, and the ground of your consolation. This word of God abideth in you, my brethren, who are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It dwells in you, it is familiar to your minds, it dwells in you richly, in a plentiful measure, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. It abides not only in your heads and in your memories, but in your hearts, where it meets with welcome, and kind entertainment.

I address particularly young Christians on another account suggested by the apostle, 'be-'cause ye have overcome the wicked one,' the god of this world, who is the powerful, implacable adversary of young men, especially of young Christians. He may be called the wicked one in a way of eminence, being himself maliciously and obstinately wicked, and constantly employed in seducing men to commit all manner of wickedness. He aims to deceive, and, if possible, to ruin you for ever. From the memorable day wherein ye threw down the weapons with which ye acted in hostility against Jesus Christ, became his voluntary subjects, and engaged to fight under his banner; from that day to this hour ye have been at war with this inveterate foe, and

now

now ye are ſaid to have overcome him. Jeſus Chriſt your Saviour and Lord actually vanquiſhed this infernal fiend in ſingle combat, and openly triumphed over him and his aſſociates upon the croſs. And now having ſat down upon his throne, as the fruit of his conqueſts, he calls you to arms, to battle, to victory; and aſſures you, that through his blood and the word of his teſtimony, if ye prove faithful to the death, the conteſt ſhall finally be decided in your favour, and he will aſſuredly render you more than conquerors.

To you, my dear young friends, who of all men have moſt need of direction, I would give a few cautions and advices, to which I requeſt your diligent attention and practical regard. You are at preſent in an evil world, with little knowledge, leſs experience, and hardly any diſtruſt. Your lively ſpirits, your warm paſſions, and raſh confidence, are apt continually to miſlead you. The greateſt care, therefore, ought to be taken, properly to guard the avenues that lead to your hearts, and to keep them with all diligence; for out of them proceed the iſſues of life and death. Every condition hath its peculiar danger and duties, but none have dangers more threatening, and duties more important, than you to whom I now ſpeak. Ye are environed with temptations of which perhaps ye are in a great meaſure inſenſible; for in your ſituation people ſeldom think that they have any thing to fear. The evils of which ye are in jeopardy

are greatly increaſed by your own inadvertency, by culpable inattention to your beſt intereſts, and natural reluctance to ſhun the gratification of bad inclinations. And ſuch often is the vanity of youthful minds, that the very intimation of miſconduct, however prudently given, is to moſt perſons diſagreeable and offenſive.—Notwithſtanding theſe unfavourable circumſtances, with real concern for your happineſs, I beſeech you,

Beware of ſloth and negligence. Diligently endeavour to improve the precious time, and ſpiritual ability which God is pleaſed to give you, for the important purpoſes to which they ought to be applied. Too many who are averſe to exertion, and inattentive to the grace given them, like ſome indolent needy people that oppreſs ſociety with a grievous weight, loudly complain of their incapacity, and ſhamefully give way to inactivity. In oppoſition to this criminal indulgence, which proves a diſgrace to Chriſtian profeſſion, hearken to the apoſtolical precepts. 'Give all 'diligence to make your calling and election 'ſure, to get faith increaſed, and to add to 'faith knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs, and charity: Be 'diligent in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving 'the Lord.' Remember, brethren, the time allotted for this arduous work is ſhort and uncertain. If a thouſand years are in God's ſight but as yeſterday when it is paſt, or as a watch in the night of three or four hours, human

man life can ſeem to him no longer than a few minutes. Do not then miſpend any part of this ſmall portion of time, but faithfully employ it with a view to approaching eternity, which comprizes infinitely more millions of ages than there are moments in millions of years. Beware of pride and ſelf-conceit. Take heed leſt ye think of yourſelves more highly than ye ought, or boaſt of things without meaſure, or over-rate your abilities and advantages. Be on your guard that ye be not intoxicated with natural gaiety, with the love of admiration or pleaſure, with fondneſs of the faſhions of this world, that paſs away, or that ye be carried away by affectation of fooliſh ſingularities which may prove injurious to yourſelves and offenſive to others. Avoid even the appearance of ſelf-ſufficiency; vehement poſitiveneſs in converſation, raſhneſs in conduct, readineſs to take offence, and ſeverity in cenſures. If the goſpel hath come to you in demonſtration of the Spirit and with power, it will ſubdue corrupt propenſities, it will bring down high thoughts into the obedience of Chriſt, it will clothe you with humility and teach you ſelf-denial.—Beware of ſelf-confidence, of truſting to your own wiſdom, righteouſneſs and ſtrength. 'He that 'truſteth to his own heart is a fool. Truſt 'then in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean 'not to thine own underſtanding. In all thy 'ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct 'thy paths.' Depend not for ſalvation on your

own obedience or righteouſneſs, which, with the church of old, ye ought to account as filthy rags. It comes far ſhort, at beſt, of the demands of the holy law of God, it cannot expiate your tranſgreſſions, nor render you acceptable in his ſight who is well pleaſed only for his righteouſneſs ſake. Nor doth it anſwer the demands of the goſpel, which requires that we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Deeply ſenſible of this humbling truth, place your entire confidence on Jeſus Chriſt, who is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth.—Take heed alſo that ye preſume not on your own ſtrength, which will render you an eaſy prey to temptation. If ye become ſelf-confident, and vain of your attainments, ye will be in danger of ſlighting the means of growing in grace, and acquiring ſtability in the ways of God; yea, of neglecting conſtant reliance on the Spirit of all grace, by whom ye are eſtabliſhed, ſtrengthened, and ſettled.—Having given you theſe cautions, I conclude my addreſs to young Chriſtians with ſome ſhort advices.

Permit me to urge you to exertion and progreſs in the exerciſes of true godlineſs. Stop not in the porch of the Lord's houſe, but quickly paſs into the holy place. Though ye are born of God, and admitted into his family, think not that ye have already attained, or are already perfect, but follow after, if that ye may apprehend that for which alſo ye

ye are apprehended of Christ Jesus. Call to remembrance your former sins, and ye will find them so great, so numerous, that ye may be surprised that your hearts do not despond, and that your repentance is so deficient. Look back on what you reckon your virtues, and ye may see them so few in number, so limited in degree, so obstructed in their course, and so mixed in their exercise, that ye may be convinced that ye have not yet attained any thing in comparison of what lies before you. Be ye then like them that love the Lord, as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength, shining with more bright effulgence unto the perfect day.—Stir up the grace of God that is in you; and for this purpose diligently use every appointed mean of spiritual improvement, with humble dependance on the divine blessing; and ye shall find in your comfortable experience, that there is not any want that Jesus Christ cannot supply; that there is not a temptation or corrupt passion which his grace cannot vanquish, nor an affliction from which his tender compassion will not relieve.—May ye, like the righteous, hold on your way, and like them who have clean hands, wax stronger and stronger. Once more,

Manifest the power of godliness by a stedfast course of holy living and unreserved obedience to the divine authority. As you desire to attain the felicity, the honour, the establishment and consolation of advanced Christians, be sure that the love of God in Christ, and

and ardent affection to the bleſſed Redeemer, chiefly occupy your minds, and prove the leading principle from whence your conduct proceeds. Let the word of truth be the only rule by which your temper and behaviour are adjuſted, the ſole directory according to which ye ſtudy to walk and to pleaſe God. Let the glory of his great name, the advancement of his kingdom, and the hope of his approbation, animate you to ſerve him with fidelity and diligence, and to run in the way of his commandments. 'Be ſtrong in the grace that 'is in Chriſt Jeſus. Live by the faith of the 'Son of God, and walk in the Spirit; that ye 'may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of 'God without rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation, among whom ye 'ſhine as lights in the world, holding forth the 'word of life.—I commend you, brethren, to 'God, and to the word of his grace, which is 'able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are ſanctified.' I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Finally, my beloved brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, live in peace, and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

Thirdly, I ſhall now ſpeak to young Chriſtians, whom the apoſtle John calls *little children*. He did not write, nor do I direct my diſcourſe to thoſe who are literally compriſed under this character, and who in the courſe of nature are in this early ſtage of life. Such perſons are incapable of underſtanding his epiſtle,

piſtle, and of receiving inſtruction from any thing I could ſay to them from this place. The little children to whom the beloved diſciple wrote, and to whom I ſhall addreſs a few ſhort advices, are thoſe who are emphatically denominated in ſcripture, *babes in Chriſt*, who were lately born of God, introduced into the ſpiritual world, and have entered on that divine life which ſhall never periſh—The lambs in the flock of Chriſt, who are young and ſimple, tender and timid, the objects of his gracious compaſſion and unremitting care. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved you, even when ye were dead in treſpaſſes, quickened you together with Chriſt, made you partakers of the divine nature, admitted you among his children, and conſtituted you heirs of his everlaſting kingdom. Being united to Jeſus Chriſt, ye are new creatures, your underſtandings, your hearts, your converſations, your employments and deſigns, are all different from what they once were. As ye have borne the image of the firſt man, ſo ye now bear the image of the ſecond man, the Lord from heaven, to whom ye are predeſtinated to be conformed. As new born babes ye deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. Your language is, Lord, evermore give us the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. On your heavenly Father ye exerciſe conſtant dependence for proviſion and protec-

tion

tion, for inſtruction and direction, with every thing neceſſary to your ſafety and comfort.

Though ye have not as yet attained thoſe large meaſures of the knowledge of Chriſt and ſpiritual ſtrength; though ye have not got ſo many victories over the wicked one as fathers and young men, ye claim attention, and I am going to addreſs you, after the example of the apoſtle, for two reaſons:

1. Becauſe your ſins are forgiven you for his name's ſake. * I heartily wiſh you joy, ye highly favoured of the Lord, on your having received this ineſtimable benefit, whereby ye are delivered from condemnation and wrath. Through the riches of divine mercy your tranſgreſſions are blotted out, your iniquities are pardoned, and to you the Lord God will not impute your ſins. Bleſſed are ye of the Lord, who are abſolved from the guilt of your treſpaſſes, and who are acquitted from the awful puniſhment to which ye were expoſed. Though God may teſtify, on ſome occaſions, his juſt diſpleaſure againſt your ſins and follies, by neceſſary chaſtiſements, yet will he not utterly take his loving kindneſs from you, nor ſuffer his faithfulneſs to fail. Happy ye who are in ſuch a case as this, who in the early period of life have eſcaped the pollutions that are in the world, who have been converted from the error of your ways, admitted into the favour, the family, and covenant of God, and enjoy acceſs to

* See ver. 12.

to him as your father and friend. Be it known to you, that not for your sakes, but for his name's sake, hath God conferred upon you this precious blessing, with those which accompany and flow from it. Ye cannot make compensation to God for the wrongs that ye have done, your sorrows cannot expiate your guilt, nor could your future imperfect obedience make amends and atone for your past transgressions. When in this helpless state, it pleased God to display the riches of his mercy and grace, to manifest his goodness and glory, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sins, and who lives to make intercession for transgressors, it pleased God, I say, to forgive you all trespasses. And,

2. Because ye have known the Father, the Father of lights and of mercies, the Father of your spirits, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him your God and Father, my dear children. Having given you understandings to know him, he hath revealed himself to you full of tender compassion and paternal affection, whereof ye have received the most satisfying proofs. Ye know him so as to fear his name, to reverence his infinite majesty and grandeur, so as to honour and love his supreme excellencies, so as to obey and submit to his holy will in all things. Of all the knowledge in the world, the knowledge of God the Father, with the early dawn of which ye are blessed, is the most

most excellent; it is preferable to choice gold, and all the things that may be desired. In his works ye see him imperfectly, as ye do the sun in a picture; in his law he appears vailed with obscurity, as the sun in a cloud; but in Jesus Christ ye may behold the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. This progressive light of the glory of God which hath arisen upon you, shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Come ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord; hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Beware of indulging those irregular propensities that ye brought into the world with you, which by gratification will gather strength, and become more difficult to be subdued. Though perhaps ye may think that their force is broken, and that ye are in no danger from them, they may yet recover strength, and attack you with such vigour, that ye may be engaged in a painful, hazardous combat. Take heed then lest pride and vanity, sloth and indolence, disinclination to duty, or immoderate attachment to things seen and temporal, involve you in great difficulties, and retard your progress in the divine life. Guard against sensuality, ambition, covetousness, and the dangerous infection of bad example; watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Avoid bad company, that would alienate your hearts from God, and seduce you into

into sin. Attend to the words of the wise man, 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. He 'that walketh with wise men shall be wise, 'but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' The enemies of religion will be bold and active in opposing your best interests, whilst alas, those who profess to be its friends, may be shy and more cautious to shew the kind affection and solicitude they ought to have for your spiritual prosperity, than others are to conceal their wickedness. Your former associates in sin will try, by many artful methods, to bring you back to their forsaken society, and some, whose good opinion ye value, may deride and contemn you. 'Forsake 'then the foolish and live, and go in the way 'of understanding.' Choose for your intimate companions them that fear the Lord and think upon his name, who shew out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom.

Grow in grace. The operations of grace in the heart are gradual, like the progress of the seeds cast into the earth, like the growth of infants into children, young men, and fathers. Diligently study to increase more and more in the exercise of every divine grace. Follow on to know the Lord, to become better acquainted and more deeply impressed with the perfections of his nature, the sovereignty of his dominion, the dispensations of his providence, the blessings of his covenant,

and

and the revelation of his will; that ye may walk so as to please him and be accepted of him through Jesus Christ. Use every appointed mean, in dependence on the divine blessing, that your faith may grow exceedingly, that hope may abound, that love may increase, that humility may be strengthened, repentance renewed, and patience have its perfect work, that ye may be complete and wanting nothing. Though God only by the powerful influence of his Spirit can cause you to spring forth as the grass, and to grow up as the willows; yet, would ye increase in faith, ye must be instant in prayer and attentive to the word of God; would ye have hope invigorated, contemplate much the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; would ye have love quickened, meditate on the love of God, the sufferings of the Redeemer, and the privileges of the saints; and so with respect to every other grace. From henceforth, when calling upon God, you may say, Thou art my Father, my God, the guide of my youth, and I trust thou wilt also be the staff of my old age. Finally, be of good courage, my dear little children, and God shall strengthen your hearts. In your Christian course ye may have to contend with many difficulties and much opposition. Ye have no cause, however, to be dismayed or to despond. Ungodly men have greater obstacles to surmount in the way to destruction, than are to be found in the path of life; and will ye be intimidated more by a few obstructions

ſtructions, than they are by the authority, the threatenings, and omnipotence of Jehovah? 'Say not, Ah! Lord God, behold I am a child; 'for ye ſhall go to all that God ſhall ſend you, 'and whatſoever he commands you ye ſhall 'ſpeak and do; for I am with you to deliver 'you, ſaith the Lord.' Truſt then in the Lord, who is your refuge and your ſtrength, your God and portion. And to him be praiſe and honour, and glory for ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REDEMPTION OF TIME.

EPH. v. 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

FEW ſubjects require to be more frequently recommended than the improvement of time. Few ſubjects are of greater moment and of more eſſential utility to the beſt intereſts of mankind. The miniſtry of the goſpel is not inſtituted to gratify men's curioſity by ingenious diſquiſitions or refined ſpeculations, but to remind them of thoſe intereſting truths, which, through the divine bleſſing, may purify their hearts, and direct their practice. It is intended to inculcate thoſe important duties of which you feel but feeble impreſſions, though you are acquainted with them. Among theſe there is perhaps none more obvious and leſs attended to than the apoſtolical precept contained in my text. It cannot therefore

therefore be unſeaſonable that, depending on aſſiſtance from God, I endeavour to ſhew the import of redeeming the time, and then offer ſome motives to recommend, and ſome directions to facilitate the practice of it.—May the Lord vouchſafe to us his countenance and bleſſing in the execution of this plan.

In order to explain the import of the duty, I ſhall conſider what is here meant by time —what by redeeming it—and the purpoſes to which it ought to be applied.

Time may denote more generally the meaſure of our continuance in this world, the whole of our preſent life, which ought to be employed in various active ſervices; or more particularly the ſeveral favourable ſeaſons afforded us for performing the different exerciſes and employments aſſigned us by the great Lord of all. In each of theſe views the duty here pointed out is of the higheſt importance, and claims our ſerious attention. The Lord God who hath determined the times before appointed, hath wiſely allotted the present ſtate of exiſtence for accompliſhing the moſt valuable purpoſes, and attaining the moſt deſirable ends. That we may diſcharge not only the ordinary functions and buſineſſes of life, and by induſtry and fidelity promote our own welfare and the happineſs of ſociety, but that we may ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leadeth to life; that we may give all diligence to be found in Chriſt, to make ſure our calling

ing and election to eternal glory, to glorify God with our souls and bodies which are his property, and to obtain a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. The period fixed for this important work commences in early youth, when reason, understanding, and the other faculties expand and ripen for exercise. It reaches to the day of dissolution, including the whole extent of life, leaving out those portions of it which, through imbecillity or affliction we are incapacitated for active services. Its utmost boundaries are limited by threescore and ten years; to some, by reason of strength, it extends to fourscore, though the bulk of mankind, being soon cut off, flee away before they enjoy the half of that time. We cannot justly complain that this term is too short for the work assigned to us, if diligently improved; for was it lengthened out much farther, as in days of old, we would be still more ready to trifle and mispend it. Life, if not cut short by folly and criminal indulgence or pursuits, is long enough to taste the imperfect pleasures and bitter sufferings of this mixed state, and in less time than many of us have enjoyed, multitudes of the celestial inhabitants have been prepared afore unto glory.

Solomon observes that God hath ordained to every thing a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven, of which that renowned preacher in the passage referred to gives a variety of instances. The Hebrew word there

there uſed, ſignifies a fixed time, pre-determined in the decree of Jehovah, whoſe counſel ſhall ſtand, and pointed out by a co-incidence of circumſtances as peculiarly adapted to the performance of certain actions. By the diſpoſitions of his Providence he hath marked the ſpring to be the moſt proper ſeaſon for caſting ſeeds into the ground, and the harveſt to be the best time of gathering the precious fruits of the earth; the darkneſs of night to be best ſuited for rest and ſleep, and the light of day for walking, and working in our different occupations. By the conſtitution of our frame, and the common rotine of buſineſs, he hath deſigned ſome particular times as most convenient for retirement and devotion, ſome for rest and refreſhment, and others for ſocial intercourſe and amuſement. By divine authority he hath conſecrated the time of youth, when people are bleſſed with most health, vigour, and vivacity as the fittest ſeaſon for remembering our Creator, and ſeeking ſo as we may find him. By his command, benediction, and example, he hath ſanctified the sabbath to be obſerved as a day of holy rest, and appropriated it to the ſolemn exerciſes of his worſhip, and the delightful ſervices of his ſanctuary. By the reviving communications of his Spirit ſome ſeaſons are admirably ſuited for the converſion of ſinners, for restoring the power of godlineſs, and imparting strength and conſolation to the feeble and dejected. By the frequent

quent revolutions which take place in our condition, under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, we ought to be excited to those exercises which correspond to the events that occur. Times of affliction call for humiliation and prayer, and require patience, submission, trust and resignation, with the lively exercise of all the other graces which support and dignify the Christian when under the pressure of distress. Seasons of prosperity demand gratitude and praise to the Giver of all good, vigilance against temptation, humble walking with God, and liberal exertions in the duties of beneficence and charity. Such is the time, such are the opportunities which the apostle calls us to redeem.

The expression is evidently metaphorical, and hath an obvious allusion to the regaining of that which hath been lost through imprudence, carelessness, or negligence. Much precious time we have thrown away in folly, vanity and vice, which cannot possibly be recalled. It is gone for ever. All that we can now do in obedience to this sacred precept is to use our utmost efforts to recover what is lost, by the faithful and diligent improvement of what may yet remain; so that the damage we sustain by our past indolence may in some measure be compensated by future exertions. As in redemption a price is paid for that which is ransomed, so in redeeming the time we have squandered away, we must part with every criminal indulgence, sensual

sensual gratifications, incompatible with our profession, our unprofitable amusements and ensnaring companions. We must lay aside indolence and sloth, and surmounting every trifling difficulty that might impede our progress in the path of duty; we must sacrifice present emoluments and transitory pleasures, when they would tempt us to neglect God, and the chief business of life. Family affairs and worldly employments must give place to more important interests which solicit attention. This wise conduct we see exemplified by Mary the sister of Lazarus, who, when a favourable occasion for spiritual improvement presented itself, omitting for a while solicitude about domestic affairs, sat down and listened with pleasure to our blessed Saviour's divine instructions. Lesser duties must be deferred, or give way when those which are of greater moment press on our attention, and require to be performed. Rest, sleep, and recreation, which are necessary in their proper place, must not encroach on the time allotted for business, and business must not interfere with seasons appropriated to piety and devotion. It behoves us not only to be active in doing good, but to be employed in doing the greatest good competent to our ability and circumstances, and in doing the best things in the best manner and in the largest measure. In few words, to redeem time is to recover what is already lost, not by stopping its rapid progress (which is impossi-

ble) but by prudence and frugality so to manage that which remains, that the smallest portion of it may not be mis-spent. It is to embrace with alacrity opportunities of active beneficence as they occur, and to discharge with expedition every duty in its proper season. Think not that you will purchase time too dear at such a rate. Be assured there is not any thing that you are called to part with for its redemption, that is worthy to be put in competition with this precious treasure; and therefore you ought without hesitation to comply with this reasonable demand. This leads me to speak,

Of the purposes to which time thus redeemed ought to be applied. In the distribution of time, and in spending the several portions into which it is divided, we ought uniformly to keep in view the advancement of the glory of God and our own salvation. Though the latter be certainly involved in the former, yet I shall speak of them separately, that I may take occasion to address you more particularly on this interesting subject. Our time, my brethren, ought to be occupied in glorifying God. The great God hath made all things for himself; he hath formed us for his glory that we may shew forth his praises. Such is his wonderful condescension that he calls us to promote the same noble design by our actions that he hath in view in his works. 'Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

Con-

Contemplating every blessing we receive, as coming from his gracious hand, let us ascribe them all to his rich mercy, let us enjoy them as the fruits of his distinguishing goodness, and through the whole of our conduct in our natural, civil, moral, and religious capacities, let us seek, not our own honour, but his glory who sent us into the world. This is both reasonable and just; it is at once our duty and our interest, to employ our time, with every other talent, to his honour who conferred them. By prosecuting with assiduity this excellent purpose, we become workers together with God, we follow the most dignified line of conduct of which we are capable, we pursue the great end of our creation, and redemption by Jesus Christ. Let us then diligently employ our time in those exercises whereby God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us endeavour so to manage our different occupations, as well as the solemn exercises of divine worship, that they may ultimately terminate in God, and bring honour to his name. And let us study entire devotedness to God, and habitual readiness for the performance of every good work; and whatsoever our hand findeth to do let us do it with all our might, knowing that there is no work, device, or knowledge in the grave whether we are going.

Time ought to be employed in promoting our salvation. This business is truly worthy

of reasonable creatures involved in sin and misery, though formed for immortality. Have you hitherto persisted in the practice of transgression, and never yet turned to the Lord from the error of your ways? Do you still continue to live without God and without Christ in the world, unacquainted with the life and power of godliness, and alienated through ignorance from the life of God? It is now full time that you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. The sooner that you enter upon this necessary work you may hope to prove more successful in the enterprize, and to enjoy the greater happiness. The longer you continue in sin, the more difficult and less probable will be your conversion. A young twig is more easily bent than an aged tree. Begin then without delay to redeem time, for securing interest in that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Be not discouraged by the obstacles that may lie in your way, but employ your utmost efforts to surmount every difficulty, convinced that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The best means applied with the utmost skill cannot of themselves prove successful, but derive all their efficacy from God, on whom you must depend to render them effectual in spite of all opposition. And this reliance must be expressed by earnest prayer to God, that by the power of his grace he may give you inclination, and

furnish

furnish you with ability to do that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

Have you abandoned your former evil ways, and returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, that you may walk with him in newness of life. Are you become dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ, that you may no longer live the rest of your time to the lusts of men, but to the will of God? Would you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, a vast variety of duties of different kinds are incumbent upon you, each of which must be performed in its season. In your several stations and relations, in your devotions, in your employments and recreations, you ought so to acquit yourselves as to shew that you are wise in discerning both time and judgment. You must act with prudence as becometh Christians in all conditions whether prosperous or adverse, in all things whether civil or sacred, in all places whether in solitude or society, at all times whether in youth or advanced age. Godliness is not a holiday suit to be occasionally put on, but a comely dress that must be daily wore, that you may appear Christians on all occasions and at all seasons. Much discretion is requisite that you may frequently converse with God, that you may act unblameably before men, that you may preserve the majesty of religion, and so adjust your time, that all your actions may occupy

their proper place. You must grow in grace, subdue your corruptions, be conformed to the whole will of God, imitate the perfect example of Jesus Christ, walk in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, and be ready to enter into the joy of your Lord, when, with respect to you, time shall end and eternity commence. Such are the valuable purposes to which time ought to be redeemed. Having explained the nature of the duty,

I shall next recommend it to your practise by the three following motives, to which I request your attention.—Time is extremely uncertain,—rapid in its progress,—and when past it never returns.

Time, my brethren, is extremely uncertain. This truth is universally acknowledged, and though it requires little illustration, it needs very much to be impressed on our hearts. Multitudes have been lamentably deceived through inattention to this obvious circumstance. So easily are we deluded, that we rashly trust to its continuance, as if time was entirely at our command, when in fact we know not how soon it may come to a period, and the brittle thread of life be snapt asunder. None of us knoweth when our Lord shall come to call him to account, but of this we have the fullest assurance, that the awful moment cannot be very distant, and it may arrive very soon. How often do we read and hear of sudden unexpected deaths; that

that such a one perished in the water, and another in the fire; that one died of distemper, another was killed; and a third without previous intimation dropt down dead in the street, at the table, or expired on the bed. How frequently doth the scriptures instruct us that life passeth away like a shadow which departeth, that it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth away. The most fleeting things imaginable are mentioned to remind us of the brevity and precariousness of human life. Boast not then of to-morrow, for you know not what shall be on the morrow. You have no certainty of enjoying any time beyond the present. Every day introduces new providences and new events, and we cannot tell what shall be next morning, or what a day may bring forth. Our times are wholly in God's hand. Acknowledging then that the time past is more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh, and that it is high time to awake out of sleep, knowing that shortly we must put off these tabernacles, let us redeem time.

This argument derives additional force from the consideration of the rapid progress of time. To excite attention to this subject it is represented in the word of God by various striking similitudes. Time quickly passeth away like a post, who with unremitting constancy and speed, goes from one place to another; like a swift ship, having the advantage of wind and current, that sails with the

utmost dispatch to the place of her destination; like an eagle that hasteth to the prey with the swiftest motion, not leaving the smallest trace behind him; like the wind, which you cannot stop, and when gone cannot be recalled. As a weaver's shuttle, it flies with the greatest velocity, the day casting it to the night and the night to the day, until the thread of life be cut off. Wherever you turn your eyes you may observe instructive emblems of the transitory nature of time, that if you learn not from one you may be taught by another. Time never stops, but like the water in the stream imperceptibly glides along whilst we eat, and drink, and sleep; whilst we work and converse it passes on without interruption. That portion of it which existed whilst I illustrated the former article of this discourse is gone, and cannot be recalled. Doth time then pass away unnoticed with such constant rapidity; surely we ought carefully to improve it for the best purposes, especially,

If we consider, that when past it never returns. Large portions of our time elapsed during childhood and youth, and much of it hath been spent in sleep and indolence, if not in vanity and sin. Many valuable seasons of improvement and of doing good have we let slip, by the right use of which we might have acquired some important temporal or spiritual advantages. Many favourable opportunities which we ought to have embraced with alacrity

alacrity for securing our best interests have been neglected. Whilst the laborious husbandman, the busy merchant, and industrious mechanic, have diligently attended to the several seasons in which they might promote the purposes they had formed, we have foolishly squandered away great part of the day of salvation. Though parsimonious in our expences, we have been profuse of our time. Though some of us may have been diligent in labouring for the meat that perisheth, how culpably negligent have we been in pursuing the glories of immortality! The loss of property, of friends, and of health, may be repaired, but the loss of time cannot be compensated. The most powerful monarchs cannot stop its career, or even retard its progress; all the riches of the East cannot recal one moment, or recover the smallest portion of it when gone. How forcible an argument this to induce us to redeem the time that is past, by making right use of the present. Let us then lay hold of every opportunity afforded us by divine mercy, for promoting the best purposes, and take heed that we waste no more precious time in idleness and sin.

2dly, The work we have to do is exceedingly important and highly necessary. Notwithstanding Jesus Christ, by finishing the work given him to do, hath accomplished the salvation of his church, many things are required of us, in dependence on his grace

and blessing, that we may obtain a share in his eternal redemption, that we may express becoming gratitude to him for his marvellous grace, and give comfortable evidence of our love to him and our brethren. These are matters of the greatest moment and most indispensable necessity. They are not like many things we pursue with great avidity, which we had better omit, or keep in a more subordinate place. Are there any affairs in which you can be engaged?—Is the acquisition of the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, worthy to be compared to restoration to the favour, image, and enjoyment of God, which form the great objects that we ought to pursue with unremitting ardour? Salvation comprehends benefits of immense value, proportioned to the infinite worth of the blood of Jesus Christ, by which they were procured, and perfectly adapted to relieve our necessities. This eternal salvation which comprizes all that is requisite to our present and future felicity, is presented to our acceptance in the gospel of the Son of God, as a precious treasure that will for ever enrich us. Immersed in a vast variety of worldly occupations, there are but few that seem to remember that the love and service of God ought to constitute our chief employment, and that we ought to give matters of the utmost importance the precedence to all others. Though the bulk of mankind exercise prudence in the management of their temporal affairs, they seem deficient

ficient of it when they act in matters relative to their spiritual concerns. In the former they are active and attentive, in the latter they discover no small measure of indolence and indifference.

Would you then improve the present season for working out your salvation, begin with reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. Having viewed the atrocity of the crimes you have committed, recollect the favours you have received, and acknowledging the shameful abuse of them, with real penitence, have recourse to the mercy of God revealed in the gospel. Acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, throw down the weapons of rebellion, and earnestly supplicate forgiveness through the propitiatory sacrifice of the blessed Redeemer. Proceed in fervent prayer to God, to implore that he would give you the new heart which he hath promised; that he would subdue your powerful corruptions, implant and cherish in your souls every divine grace, and abundantly bless to you the means he hath instituted for these gracious purposes. Read with attention the holy scriptures, which contain treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. How can you employ time so well as in conversing with the doctrines and precepts of the word of God, endeavouring to become intimately acquainted with

with them, and to get them deeply impressed upon your minds by devout meditation. Thus employed in every proper season you may reap a harvest of spiritual fruit, and enjoy abundant consolation.

Having experienced the grace of God in truth, and the power of godliness, embrace every opportunity of expressing your gratitude to him, and of manifesting your conformity to his will. We must affirm constantly that they who believe in God be careful to maintain good works. This salutary doctrine is every where inculcated in scripture. Indeed, one important end for which Jesus Christ came into the world, was to redeem from all iniquity, and to bless us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Think not the Son of God was manifested only to bear the punishment due to our transgressions; to allow sin to reign triumphant in our hearts and lives, and that we may throw away our time in the service of divers lusts and pleasures. The principal design of Christ's appearance was to destroy sin, to rescue us from its dominion as well as its guilt. Deeply sensible of our infinite obligations to him for his astonishing grace, we ought to shew forth his praises, and to consecrate our time to his service and glory. Let your light then so shine before men, that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father in heaven. It is incumbent upon you to fight the good fight of faith, to run with patience

the

the race set before you, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, knowing that the way to the kingdom of God lies through much tribulation. It behoves you also to give yourselves to reading, meditation and prayer. You must oppose solicitations to sin, attend on divine ordinances, maintain a good conversation with meekness of wisdom, and perform works of justice, mercy, and charity, and the duties belonging to your several stations and relations. You have to acquire comfortable assurance of God's love, the earnest of the Spirit, and growing meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. These and many other things ought to be done in due season, with alacrity and pleasure, in humble dependence on divine assistance, direction, and acceptance, through the one Mediator. If such various important and necessary duties are required of saints and sinners, of good and bad men in their several conditions, it is indispensibly requisite that we instantly begin to redeem time by the most assiduous, vigorous exertions. The sooner we commence well timed labours in the work of the Lord, the more delightful the service we shall accomplish; the more diligent and industrious we are in improving precious time, the sweeter will be our rest after our labours are finished, and the more glorious will be our reward in heaven. Once more consider,

3dly, That the days are evil. Days are de-

denominated evil when iniquity of various kinds becomes generally prevalent, and misery, its direful consequence, appears in different shapes among society. This being in some measure the case in every age, the argument mentioned in my text hath been used at all times and in every place where the apostolical exhortation hath been inforced. Unquestionably those criminal practices, from the prevalence of which days are said to be evil, have been very different in different periods; for it often happens that the sins which abounded in one generation differ widely from those that were predominant in another age. I shall not at present inquire into the causes which have contributed to render former days better than those wherein we live. It may, however, place our apostle's argument in a more striking light than I could otherwise state it, to institute a comparison between the evil days that were in his time, and those whereof we have now just cause to complain, which ought to be considered by us as a powerful motive to redeem time. If the judgment of the inspired writer concerning the age wherein he lived be well founded, notwithstanding the exemplary piety of Christians which then shone forth amidst the darkness of heathenism, surely we need not hesitate to form the same estimate of the time in which our lot is fallen, when, amid the profession of Christianity, infidelity, impiety, and licentious practices are so frequent and

and avowed, that the prediction he delivered seems now to be verified, 2 Tim. iii. 1. 'In 'the last days perilous times shall come, for 'men shall be lovers of their own selves, co- 'vetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobe- 'dient to parents, unthankful, unholy, with- 'out natural affection, truce-breakers, false 'accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of 'those that are good, traitors, heady, high- 'minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers 'of God, having a form of godliness, but de- 'nying the power thereof.' What a tremendous representation, what a group of bad characters is here collected! The description is not exaggerated, nor is the picture overcharged which is exhibited of the last days.

At the time wherein this epistle was written to the faithful in Christ Jesus, the vocation of the Gentile nations to the faith of the gospel and the communion of the Christian church had lately commenced, and the glorious effects of the apostles ministry, accompanied with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, had become conspicuous. In the time wherein we live, the salutary effects of the belief of the truth are little apparent; many seem to be given up to a reprobate mind as the just punishment of their not having received the truth in love, and of their putting away from them the words of eternal life. Then in every place where the glad tidings of salvation were promulgated many believed, and turned from dead idols to serve the living God.

Now

Now many enjoying the same privilege, turn from God to the creature, whom they love and serve more than the Creator, who is God blessed for ever. Then vast multitudes resorted to the banner of Jesus Christ, and did cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart; a plentiful harvest was collected out of the world by the ministry of the word. Now those who repair to the standard of the Captain of Salvation, that they may fight under his good conduct, are few in number, may we not say, as the gleaning grapes that are left, or as the shaking of the olive tree. Then Jesus Christ, having laid the foundations of his kingdom, liberally conferred upon his disciples, from his inexhaustible treasures, the choicest gifts, whereby they were enriched and adorned. Now, criminal ingratitude, contempt of the divine benefits, obstinacy in transgression, hath hardened the hearts of many, and provoked him to with-hold good things from us. Then, the predictions of the old prophets respecting the glorious state of the church, the establishment and increase of the Redeemer's kingdom, were fulfilled. Now is accomplished the prophecies of Jesus Christ and his apostles, who foretold that in the last time shall come a falling away from the faith and obedience of the truth, and a general security. Then, notwithstanding the extensive prevalence of Judaism and heathenism, the triumphant power of the gospel was so illustriously displayed in the holy lives of Christians, that

that their enemies were constrained to acknowledge the blamelessness and sanctity of their conduct. Now the adversaries of Christians, with too much reason, upbraid them with the inconsistency of their practice to the truths they profess to believe, whilst many who were baptized into Christ prove a disgrace to the worthy name by which they are called.

After fairly stating this comparison, doth it not plainly appear that our days are in some respects worse than those which the apostle calls evil days, and consequently, that the motive whereby he urges the redemption of time, far from being diminished, hath much added to its former weight. Since then we live in evil, degenerate days, let us spend every day well, employed in the service of our Master in heaven, and in the performance of those good works which are acceptable to God and profitable to men. Whatever be your character and condition, whether you act in a public or private capacity, whether you do business in the city or in the country, whether you are employed amid the din of arms, or sequestrated in peaceful retirement, abstain from all appearance of evil, and diligently improve the season of your merciful visitation, with a view to the future account that you must give to God who judgeth righteously. The more that you see people addicted to evil, to idleness and dissipation, be you the more active, vigilant, and circumspect in doing good. Allow not business or company, amusement

musement or idleness so to engross your attention as to divert you from the work of him that sent you into the world; but work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

I shall conclude with some short exhortations to facilitate the practice of the important duty I have been recommending.

Cautiously avoid whatever might unnecessarily consume your precious time. Shun vain and unprofitable conversation. Much time is spent insensibly in this pernicious practice, from which no earthly advantage, and still less spiritual improvement is derived. It extends its hurtful influence to societies and seasons where it might least be expected to intrude, so that all are in danger of suffering from its malignant contagion. To prevent the infection from spreading, associate as little as possible with bad or trifling company; and when you enter among agreeable society, improve every proper opportunity of receiving and communicating useful knowledge and entertainment. Let your speech be always with grace, and tending to edification. Be active and industrious. By languor and listlessness you may let pass many valuable seasons which might be appropriated to good purposes. 'He that is slothful in his work,' saith Solomon, 'is brother to him that is a great 'waster.' Be not then slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Diligently pursue your several occupations, and perform

perform with pleasure and spiritual activity every part of the service of God in which you engage. This leads me

To direct you to steady, vigorous exertion. This advice is every where inculcated in scripture in such a diversity of expressions as claims attention. 'Cursed be he,' saith the prophet Jeremiah, 'that doth the work of the Lord 'deceitfully.' If the person exposed himself to the malediction of God who did not faithfully execute the divine vengeance upon the enemies of the church, the work primarily alluded to in the words now cited, how much more do they who neglect their own salvation and that of others. Laying aside every incumbrance from connection, business, or condition in life, and every sin that easily besets you, so run your Christian race that you may obtain. Notwithstanding the difficulties that may lie in the way, be solicitous to make progress in holiness, to mortify sin, to resist temptation, to grow in knowledge and grace, and to add one virtue to another. After the laudable example of the apostle Paul, forgetting things that are behind, press forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To conclude,

Study through the grace of God to persevere in seasonably performing every commanded duty. 'A good man,' saith the royal prophet, 'bringeth forth fruit in season, and 'ordereth his affairs with discretion.' One duty mistimed proves a hindrance to another, whereas

whereas if our services are well disposed, like parts of a well regulated clock, every thing we do will help forward another. Much of the art of redeeming time consists in diligent attention to this beautiful order. Be not then weary in well doing, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not. Look not back, like Lot's wife, on prohibited objects. Forsake not the service of your Divine Master, like Demas, who loved this present world; but wrestle as did Jacob, until you obtain the blessing; determined, like Elisha, that you will not desist from following your beloved Master, but cleave to him closely, until having attended him through the Jordan of death, and dropt these frail bodies, you shall ascend into heaven, to celebrate his praises through eternity. To him be glory for ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON XIII.

THE CERTAINTY AND SOLEMNITY OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

REV. XX. 11. 12.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

FROM these words I intend to discourse of the final judgment: A subject of all others that can be mentioned the most magnificent and the most interesting. It exhibits to view a truly majestic scene, in comparison of which the greatest events of this present life are inconsiderable, the most important transactions relative to this world are insignificant, of which the most splendid objects that we have contemplated, the most pompous images wherewith we are acquainted cannot furnish any adequate representation. Nor is the subject less interesting than it is grand.

It

It concerns, not merely the affairs of some remote countries or kingdoms, some particular generations or species of the human kind; it relates to that very society of which we are individuals, to the affairs of that very country where we reside, to men of this very age wherein we live, and to each of us in particular. Let us now fix our attention on this solemn, awful scene, described with incomparable beauty and sublimity in my text, which was presented in vision to the apostle John, and of which every one in this assembly shall not only be a spectator, but by the irreversible sentence then to be pronounced, his everlasting happiness or misery shall be irrevocably determined. In humble dependence upon the assistance and blefsing of God, let us consider,

I. The infallible certainty of the approaching great event that the apostle had exhibited to him in vision, which we ought frequently and steadily to contemplate. As I am addressing a congregation of professing Christians, I shall discuss this article with much brevity, that I may not long detain you from the principal objects of this discourse. I suppose that I am not preaching to infidels and novices, and that the arguments commonly adduced in proof of the future judgment are so well known to many of you, that little more is requisite than simply to state them in order to remind you of what you know, to guard you against infidelity, and to establish

you

you in the belief of the truth.—One leading evidence of the judgment to come is derived from the human constitution. The great Creator of all hath endowed us with the faculty of reason whereby we are capable of discerning good and evil. He hath implanted in our nature a principle that induces us to expect, that, in the administration of his divine government he will deal with us according to our improvement, or abuse of the powers and advantages he hath conferred upon us. Our hopes of being rewarded, and our fears of being punished, on account of our good and bad conduct, afford a presumptive proof that we are responsible to God for our actions. This argument is corroborated by the essential perfections of Jehovah, which warrant this obvious conclusion, that as he approves of what is good, and condemns what is evil, he will unquestionably give public demonstration of the equity of his government, by properly rewarding and punishing men according to their works. In consequence of this conviction arising from the work of the law written upon our hearts, the apostle Paul affirms that our consciences bear witness, and our thoughts in the mean while accuse or excuse one another. You have then in your very constitution a strong proof of the doctrine contained in my text.

Another evidence of this important truth is derived from the disorders of society. Thousands of vicious irregularities, of enormous crimes

crimes disturb the order and peace of society, which human laws cannot prevent or punish, and that cannot be redressed until the final judgment. Cruel tyrants, superior to human control, violate the most sacred rights, break the most solemn treaties, and spread desolation over whole kingdoms; and whilst they sit upon thrones and dwell in sumptuous palaces, those who are greatly their inferiors in wickedness have suffered the most infamous punishments. Hypocritical, deceitful, and designing men, under the most plausible pretexts, and sometimes under the shadow of piety, have committed the most atrocious crimes, that have never been punished in this world. The most abominable ingratitude, which hath prompted men to abandon their friends, to desert the oppressed and the helpless, hath passed unnoticed by those who in this present state were authorized to recompense them as they deserved. On the other hand, the upright among men, though harmless and inoffensive, perhaps exceedingly useful in their station, have often been afflicted and persecuted, deprived of the fruits of their industry, exposed to the greatest hardships, to reproach, to torture, to death itself in its most hideous forms. In few words, the wicked frequently escape many evils which they richly deserve, and enjoy pleasures of which they are unworthy, whilst the righteous suffer many calamities which they have not merited, and are deprived of innumerable comforts they had right

to

to expect. And doth not this confused state of things, in which, as Solomon observed there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous; doth not this confused state of things, I say, give evidence that God will hereafter judge the world?

The last proof that I mention is taken from the Holy Scriptures. Blessed be God this comfortable doctrine doth not depend upon any doubtful process of reasoning, but is supported and illustrated by the most clear and express declarations both of the Old and New Testaments The apostle Jude affirms, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, foretold this great event. 'Behold,' said he, 'the Lord 'cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to 'execute judgment upon all.' David, the royal prophet, predicted that our God shall come and judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth. Solomon the king of Israel testified that God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Hear the explicit declaration of Jesus Christ himself. 'The hour is coming in 'which all that are in their graves shall hear 'the voice of the Son of God, and shall come 'forth; they that have done good to the resur-'rection of life, and they that have done evil 'to the resurrection of damnation.' The apostle Paul delivers his testimony in the strong-

est and most express terms. 'We must all 'appear,' saith he, 'before the judgment 'seat of Christ, that every one may receive 'the things done in the body, according to 'that he hath done, whether it be good or 'bad.' The apostle Peter, when putting us in remembrance of the words spoken before by the holy prophets and apostles of the Lord and Saviour, says, 'that the heavens and the 'earth are reserved unto fire against the day 'of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' And in my text, the beloved disciple gives a very sublime description of the judicial procedure which he beheld in vision. Indeed, this capital doctrine is not only often asserted in scripture, but is so intimately connected with every part of divine revelation, that the whole must stand or fall with it.

This fundamental truth, my brethren, which I have been endeavouring to establish, demands your most serious attention. We all profess to believe it, but alas! how few demonstrate by the holiness of their lives, the reality and power of faith. How few are solicitously careful to avoid every thing that might expose them to condemnation at the judgment of the great day, and vigorously endeavour to secure the approbation of the Judge of all the earth at his appearance. Did we seriously believe and frequently consider this interesting truth as we ought, the prospect which it sets before us would have another sort of influence upon our temper and practice than what is visible in the lives of many.

ny. What manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. How devout, obedient, and grateful should we be toward the Most High; how just, charitable, and merciful toward our brethren; how attentive that our whole conduct be governed by the laws of truth and righteousness! As it is not more certain that we now exist, than that we shall hereafter be judged by our Lord, let us henceforth study, in humble dependence upon God, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us contemplate,

II. The magnificent appearance of the supreme Judge. The emblematical description of his glory given in the text hath an obvious allusion to the courts of judicature established among men, in which, to give greater solemnity to the procedure, a bench is erected for the judge, or a throne for the prince who is to administer judgment. Though the apostle John does not expressly mention in the 11th verse the name of the person whose majestic glory he beheld, the least doubt cannot be entertained respecting him whose designation and character is indubitably ascertained in other passages of scripture, and who in verse 12th is explicitly called God. The eternal Jehovah hath been pleased to constitute the Lord Jesus Christ the final Judge of the world,

as he himself hath instructed us, 'The Father 'judgeth no man, but hath committed all 'judgment unto the Son.' He hath entrusted him with the administration of this great extensive work, that in a visible human form he may execute it in the day he hath appointed him to judge the world in righteousness. And he hath commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. The only begotten Son of God, the Word who was with God, and was God, who was manifest in the flesh, who appeared in the form of a servant, who became poor for our sakes, and obedient to the death of the cross, is invested with judiciary power to determine the everlasting condition of all mankind. His infinite knowledge, irresistible power, and consummate righteousness; his experience of human infirmity, temptation, affliction and sorrow, perfectly qualify him for this arduous undertaking. And to this diſtinguiſhed honour he is juſtly entitled as the reward of his profound humiliation, of his perfect obedience, complicated ſufferings, and meritorious death, to which he voluntarily submitted, that he might conduct many ſons to glory.

This illustrious person the apostle John beheld sitting upon a great white throne. What a splendid appearance did he make when he saw him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, of which a sublime description is given

given in chap. i. from the 13th verse of this sacred book. The representation given of him in my text is still more grand and awful. He was seated upon a throne, the ensign of supreme majesty, and uncontrolable authority, intimating that his sentence shall prove final, and that from his tribunal there can be no appeal. The determinations of inferior courts held among men for preserving the order of society may be complained of, appealed from, and reversed by the superior, who have power to review them: whereas, not one of the decisions delivered by him that sitteth upon the throne shall ever be revoked, nor are they cognizable by any other tribunal. Indeed, it is impossible to assign any valid reason why any one sentence pronounced by him ought to be altered. The knowledge of the Son of God is infinite. He is perfectly acquainted with every individual that shall appear before his judgment seat; his penetrating eye reaches the secret recesses of the heart, and clearly discerns the thoughts and purposes, the words, the works, and ways of every man. No obscurity of place can conceal from his all-seeing eye, to which the light and the darkness are alike. No solitude can exclude from his inspection whose presence fills heaven and earth. No time can obliterate any of our actions from the book of his remembrance, wherein they are all recorded.

The throne upon which this glorious personage was seated, is said to have been great,

intimating that he is a great God and a great King, the Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth, who possesses incomparable majesty, omnipotence, and universal dominion. The power of earthly monarchs is small, and limited in many instances; so feeble as to have been opposed with impunity by combinations of those who despise government. So numerous sometimes have been the transgressors of the laws, that those in authority have been obliged to connive at the most flagrant enormities, and to suffer them to escape deserved punishment. Besides, earthly governors often find themselves unable, from the scanty treasures of which they have the disposal, properly to recompense the important services that have been done to them; and therefore in many cases the reward is inadequate to the good offices performed. But his power who sitteth on this great throne is unlimited and irresistible; no opposition can counteract its exertions. He can inflict the most exquisite torments, destroy both soul and body in hell for ever; and all the united efforts of the creatures cannot reverse one of his decisions, or prevent it from being carried into execution. He hath all the treasures in heaven and earth at his disposal, and can bestow infinitely more upon his faithful servants than they deserve, yea far beyond what they can ask or think.

The throne upon which the Judge was seen is asserted to have been white, affording a beautiful

beautiful emblem of his untainted purity and inflexible juſtice, by whom the moſt ſpecious pretexts will not be regarded, nor improper reſpect ſhewn to any claſs of people. In courts of judicature, among men, juſtice may be perverted through ignorance, partiality, prejudice or paſſion, by ſlaviſh fear, by private intereſt, or by means of bribes, which blind the eyes, in conſequence whereof criminals may eſcape puniſhment. Nothing of this ſort can poſſibly take place with the Judge of all the earth, whoſe judgment can never by any means be biaſſed. With him there is no reſpect of perſons. Every cauſe which might contribute to pervert the execution of juſtice by earthly magiſtrates, is entirely excluded here, and cannot have the ſmalleſt influence upon him who is ſeated upon this white throne, from whoſe auguſt preſence ſaith the Apoſtle, 'the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.' At the glorious appearance of the Son of God, the frame and conſtitution of this world ſhall be totally changed, and paſs away. All theſe things which you now behold ſhall be diſſolved; the heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, the earth alſo, and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. How dreadful, how tremendous that majeſty from before which they ſhall flee away as a ſhadow.

Let us, my brethren, fix our thoughts upon this great white throne, and him that ſitteth

upon it. Every circumſtance unites to claim our cloſeſt attention. How comparatively mean and trivial doth every other object appear. There is not a ſubject, with which our minds can be occupied, of greater magnitude, and more momentous than this. Creatures innumerable, guilty immortal creatures, ſifted before the dread tribunal of him who is able forever to ſave and deſtroy, that they may be adjudged to eternal life, or everlaſting puniſhment, according to their real character. Compared with this moſt important tranſaction, the buſineſſes of this preſent ſtate, conducted with the greateſt parade, are trifling and inſignificant. Every thing relative to profit and loſs, to pleaſure or pain, to life or death, diſappears when brought into view with this glorious throne and him that ſitteth upon it. Nor is there any object ſo intereſting to every individual of mankind. You who hear of this matter with indifference, you who will not believe this truth but reject and contemn it, you who ſeldom or never think of it, and allow worldly objects to engroſs your whole attention; whoſoever you are, you ſhall ſtand before the Son of man, when ſeated on his dread tribunal, and receive from him your final ſentence. Nor is any event more certain than this of which I now ſpeak: No valuable purpoſe could be ſerved, by heaping up proofs where I am confident they are not wanting. Look within you, look around you, look into the word of God, that cannot lie, and ſay if you

you can, that this doctrine is a cunningly deviſed fable. You yourſelves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; for when they ſhall ſay, peace and ſafety, then ſudden deſtruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they ſhall not eſcape. To all this I may add, that the appearance of the Son of God to judgment is faſt approaching. Though at a vaſt diſtance it would juſtly demand our higheſt regard. But his advent is near; "for "in a little time, he that ſhall come, will come "and will not tarry." Already the Judge ſtandeth before the door, and each of us will ere long be ſiſted before his tribunal, when he ſhall ſit upon the throne of his glory, and before him ſhall be gathered all nations. Let us ſurvey,

III. The univerſal extent of the final judgment. The apoſtle John declared that he 'ſaw the ſmall and great, ſtand before God:' the apoſtle Peter teſtified, 'that Jeſus Chriſt is or-'dained of God, to be the Judge of quick and 'dead,' and the apoſtle Paul affirmed, 'that we 'ſhall all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of 'Chriſt.' All mankind, who have ever lived in the ſeveral ſucceſſive generations of the world, all who are now alive on the face of the earth, and all who ſhall hereafter exiſt, until the conſummation of all things: In whatever quarter of the univerſe they have lived, whatever diſpenſation of religion they have enjoyed, to whatever diviſion of mankind they belonged,

whether Jew or Gentile, Chriſtian or Mahometan: Whatever may be your rank and condition in the world, whether high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, you ſhall appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, to receive your final doom. You that are great, rich, and honourable, ſhall not be exempted. Though your preſent ſtation may excuſe you from giving account of your conduct to men, yet your wealth, power and dignity, will give no precedence in the day of judgment, nor exempt you from responsibility to the Almighty. 'God accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands.' The more eminent your station, the more extensive your influence; the more plentiful your fortune, the greater are your obligations to the service of God, and the more awful must be the account which you shall render to him. The greater freedom you have enjoyed from the toilsome labours and pinching straits sustained by many of your brethren, the more leisure and opportunities you have had of doing good, and the greater affluence you have possessed, the larger must be your reckoning; 'for of them to whom much is given, much will be required.' Nor ſhall you that are ſmall, mean, and inconſiderable, eſcape the notice of the Son of God, or be overlooked amidſt the great aſſembly. Though you are entruſted but with one talent, you ſhall be called to account how you have improved it. Notwithſtanding ſome of you who are in low and ſtraitened circumſtances,

ces, may imagine you have but little to account for, you ought to remember that you have much precious time, many valuable opportunities, if not of doing, yet of receiving good. You are acquainted with the things that belong to your peace; you enjoy the generous offers of a Saviour, and with him of pardon of sin, sanctifying grace, and eternal life: and before the judgment seat of Christ, you must give account of the improvement you have made of these advantages, and of every part of your conduct in the several conditions and relations you sustain.

Whatever may be your character and description, whether you be good or evil, righteous or wicked, you must be sisted before the throne of judgment. In scripture all mankind are distributed into two classes, which originate in the different spiritual conditions and moral qualities of which they are respectively possessed; and concerning each of them the word of God explicitly declares, that they shall stand before the Supreme Judge. The righteous shall be placed on his right hand, that they may publicly receive a sentence of absolution. In consequence of the judgment that followed immediately after death, they were already acquitted, and their souls made blessed in the enjoyment of God. But then their bodies and spirits being reunited, in presence of the assembled world they shall be publicly absolved from guilt, and solemnly invested in the possession of the kingdom prepared

pared for them from the foundation of the world.—The wicked shall be sisted upon his left hand, that, in the presence of angels and saints, sentence of condemnation may be pronounced upon them. Already they were condemned in the sacred oracles, and in their own consciences; this judgment was confirmed, and in part inflicted at their miserable death. But their bodies being raised from the dead, and reunited to their souls, they shall hear the terrible sentence pronounced upon them, which shall be immediately executed. 'God 'will then render unto every man according 'to his deeds, to them, who by patient con- 'tinuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, 'and immortality, eternal life; but unto them 'that are contentious, and do not obey the 'truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation 'and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon eve- 'ry soul of man that doth evil.'

What strong consolation doth this part of my subject administer to the righteous, who are accepted of God, through the Lord our righteousness, and who are walking in all his ordinances and commandments blameless. To you right hearted men, who are created after God in righteousness and true holiness, and who serve him in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your lives: To you I say this article of my discourse conveys desirable comfort. Whatever be your external circumstances in this world, you may derive the most agreeable refreshment from the reviving prospect which my

my text presents to your view. Are you depressed with an affecting sense of the many aggravated iniquities that you have committed? are you harrassed by many powerful temptations? are you dejected by many strong discouragements? are you distressed with various wants, that you cannot have supplied? are you hurt by injuries from which you cannot now be relieved? This animating consideration may support you and mitigate your sorrows, you shall have all your complaints and grievances redressed, and your labour of love recompensed, when you shall stand among the small and great before God. What though you are in straitened circumstances, excluded from the luxuries and grandeur of this world; you may taste that the Lord is gracious, and be advanced to high degrees of honour and glory at the coming of Jesus Christ. What though you are reproached and injured, you may be devout and just, humble, resigned, and merciful, animated with the pleasing view of being openly acquitted by the Son of God, who will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon day. Though you may be conscious of many deficiences and failures, how effectually may you be relieved from disquieting fears by looking forward to his appearance, who loved you, who died for your offences, and rose again for your justification, who hath pleaded your cause in heaven, in whom you have believed and trusted, whom you have

have loved and obeyed, and for whom you have patiently waited.

What a dreadful prospect doth Jesus Christ seated upon his glorious white throne open to the wicked and ungodly! To you who obstinately persist in your trespasses, and refuse to yield subjection to the divine authority, who continue in impenitence and unbelief, and live under the influence of pride, malice, covetousness, and other corrupt passions, contemning the riches of divine grace revealed in the gospel—To you who under the vail of hypocrisy, and the profession of religion, indulge in hatred and uncharitableness, in fraud, falsehood, and secret enmity to the worship and law of God, this part of my subject exhibits a most awful scene. In the day of judgment you must stand before God, whose righteous commands you have despised, and of whose wrath none knoweth the power. You must be judged by the compassionate Saviour, whose condescending offers you have rejected, whose calls to repentance you have disobeyed, whose blood you have slighted, and whose Spirit you have resisted. He will then vindicate his own and his Father's honour, by punishing you according to the demerit of your atrocious crimes. How will you be overwhelmed with consternation and terror at the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, when you shall hear your dreadful doom pronounced by that blessed mouth into which grace was poured. Em-

brace,

brace, then, without delay the Son of God, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way: When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Let us next review,

IV. The judicial procedure recorded in the text, of which the apostle John saith he was a witness in vision; 'The books were open-'ed,' &c. In this expression there seems to be a manifest allusion to the practice observed in courts of justice established among men: When persons are to be tried, satisfying evidence must be adduced during the trial of the alleged matters of fact, that sufficient proof being brought of their undubitable certainty, a fair and equitable sentence may be pronounced. On such occasions records containing the memorable events that happened in the kingdom, or city, where they were kept were appealed to, and produced when necessary. Hence we read in the book of Esther, that on the night whereon king Ahasuerus could not sleep, he commanded to bring the book of Records of the Chronicles, and they were read before him; and therein was found written the signal service done by Mordecai the Jew, who had discovered a dangerous plot that was formed against the life of the prince. In reference to this custom, the books are said to be opened at the final judgment, that clear and incontroiable evidence may be adduced of the actions according to which

which mens everlasting state shall be determined.

The book of the divine omniscience shall then be unfolded. God, my brethren, seeth all things, and knoweth all things: 'There is not any creature or action that is not manifest in his sight. He knoweth our down sitting and uprising; he understandeth our thoughts afar off; he compasseth our paths, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways: There is not a word in our tongue but he knoweth it altogether. The darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him: There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves.'—The book of God's remembrance shall be opened. His knowledge cannot be obliterated or impaired in any degree by length of time. So feeble and limited are our mental faculties, that we often forget what we ourselves have spoken and acted, and find that we are unable to recollect the words and actions that we once heard and saw. But nothing can possibly escape the remembrance of that omniscient God, to whom all his works and all his creatures are known from the beginning. Little do men consider, that God remembereth all their wickedness; and too seldom do those who fear the Lord consider that he hearkens and hears their conversation, and that a book of remembrance is written before him for them that think upon his name.

The

The book of every man's conscience shall also be unfolded. The sentence to be pronounced by the supreme Judge will not rest upon some uncertain presumptions, or dubious evidences, but upon facts clearly authenticated, and confessed by the parties themselves Conscience, which may now be disregarded shall then set the sins of every individual before him, and be instead of a thousand witnesses to attest our conduct, and to give evidence of every ones integrity or wickedness. It will bear faithful testimony to our real character, and constrain us to acknowledge the truth, and to own the perfect equity of every part of the judicial procedure.—Beside these, the apostle mentions another book called the Book of Life, in which are engraven the names or characters of every one among the living in Jerusalem. Some of you may have remarked, that every thing whereby this select society over which the Lord of life presides is peculiarly distinguished, and possesses the attribute of life. The spirit of life enters into them, and they become living creatures; they walk by the light of life, they are supported by the bread and water of life, and in due time they shall be conducted to the fountain and tree of life. The character of all those who are invested with these inestimable prerogatives is accurately delineated in the book of life, which seems to be the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the record that God hath given to us, eternal life, and that this life

is

is in his Son, containing this general proposition: 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he 'that hath not the Son hath not life.' As the names of free citizens entitled to certain privileges were anciently enrolled in a book or register by which they proved the validity of their claim to these immunities; in like manner, the book of life describes the citizens of the new Jerusalem, the servants of the living God, to whom is promised the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit and eternal life. It expressly teaches what they must be, and what they must do who are entered heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and who shall finally be admitted into it. At the general judgment, these books shall be opened, wherein are recorded all the thoughts, words, and actions of every individual of mankind; the book of life shall be opened, and agreeable to what is therein written, we shall be judged according to our works.

These interesting considerations ought to induce us to reverence the omniscience of Jehovah, to pay a dutiful respect to conscience and to the book of life. God, my friends, is our constant witness; in all places, and at all times we act under his immediate inspection, and he who now searches our hearts and ponders our goings, is the impartial Judge to whom we must give account, and by whom we shall be finally absolved or condemned. What deep impression ought this momentous truth to make upon our minds! how vigilant

and

and circumspect, how diligent and faithful should it render us in every part of our behaviour. How solicitous that in all respects we may act as Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile, that we may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ. Let us exercise ourselves, in keeping consciences void of offence toward God, and toward man; that we may have the pleasing testimony that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. Such a testimony will inspire us with humble hope that we shall not be ashamed at the coming of the Lord; 'for if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; whereas if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.'—Let us carefully consult the word of God, the book of life, which contains the infallible rule whereby the procedure of the last judgment shall be conducted. Seriously enquire, if, in obedience to the command of God, you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, repented of your sins, and demonstrated the reality and efficacy of these graces by good works, that are approved by God, and acceptable to men. Attentively consider, if through the agency of the Holy Ghost you have experienced, that inward and extensive change which Jesus Christ hath affirmed to be absolutely necessary to prepare you for entering into the kingdom of heaven, and if you daily study to obey

obey his will and to walk in his steps. Then may you look forward with hope and joy, to his appearance and his kingdom.

I proceed to intimate,

V. The decisive sentence which shall be pronounced upon every man according to his works. At this awful period every thing shall undergo a strict examination, and be suitably recompensed. Even our most secret thoughts will be brought into judgment in the day wherein God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Our Lord who, in his sermon from the mount, gives laws to the hearts and passions of men, hath solemnly declared, 'that there is nothing hid which 'shall not be revealed, nor secret that shall not 'be known.' The Apostle of the Gentiles thus writes in one of his Epistles, 'judge nothing 'before the time until the Lord come, who 'will bring to light the hidden things of dark-'ness, and will make manifest the counsels 'of the hearts.' God who understandeth our thoughts afar off, who is now the witness of all that passes in our hearts, minutely observes the ardent desires, the devout gratitude, and generous designs that arise in the minds of the regenerated part of mankind, their godly sorrow, their abhorrence of sin, and firm attachment to his service. And their heavenly Father who seeth in secret will reward them openly.—With no less accuracy does he look into the inward part of the wicked, and perceive the vicious workings

ings of their minds. He is privy to all the contempt with which they treat his perfections and providence, his law and gospel, and the gross dissimulations they are guilty of, when destitute of internal corresponding dispositions, amidst their professions of respect and devotion, and the external services that they perform. All this concealed wickedness shall be revealed and punished.

All our words shall be brought into judgment. This is not considered as it ought by the bulk of mankind. Nothing however is more certain, according to the express testimony of Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Judge, hath explicitly declared, 'I say unto you, that every idle (every in-'jurious malicious) word that men shall speak, 'they shall give an account thereof in the 'day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt 'be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be 'condemned.' The reasons are obvious. Words, as well as actions, discover our real character, and often produce as great effects upon those with whom we are connected as any thing that we do. The calves of our lips presented unto God, the advices, the admonitions, and consolations which we impart to our brethren, are as real expressions of love as any actions whatever. By blasphemous language we as certainly offend God, as by any other atrocious crime; by slander, falsehood, and corrupt conversation, we as effectually injure our neighbour as if we robbed

or

or defrauded him. We may either corrupt or edify him by our words as well as by our examples; and therefore the righteous God will justify or condemn us by the evidence they afford. Once more,

All our actions, even those not cognisable by earthly judges, shall also be judged of. Many of the works of men are involved in such uncertainty and obscurity, many of them are so complicated, and, through want of proper evidence, lie so far beyond our reach, that they cannot be developed. They baffle all the efforts of earthly magistrates to ascertain their criminality or innocence. But before the tribunal of God every action done by the children of men, will be exactly appretiated and recompensed.—Omissions of duty will be publicly noticed. Too many conclude that, because they are not openly profane and wicked, but decent and regular in their conduct, though destitute of love to God, and charity toward men, they shall not be condemned by the Son of God. Such expectations are perfectly inconsistent with what our Lord hath in plain terms asserted in the account he hath given of the general judgment, Matth. xxv. Indeed our Lord's procedure in this, as in every other instance, is just and equitable; for negligence in improving talents and opportunities with which we are entrusted, in many cases manifests more criminal contempt of the divine authority, than the actual violation of the law of God. But this is not all:

Our

Our good and bad actions will be particularly reviewed and examined into, as evidences of our having unfeignedly believed in the Son of God, and cordially submitted to his righteousness, instructions and authority; of our having been effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and of our faithful improvement of the talents committed to our trust: Or they will be considered as proofs of our neglect of the salvation of Christ, of our contempt of his grace, of our slothfulness, and abuse of the valuable advantages with which we were favoured. And, according to the united testimony of these unequivocal evidences, our everlasting state will be determined by one or other of these decisive sentences, published by the Supreme Judge from his glorious throne, 'Come ye blessed of 'my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared 'for you from the foundation of the world;' or, 'Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, pre-'pared for the devil and his angels.' Thus the awful scene shall close! these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Here the powers of imagination and of language fail. And I conclude this discourse.

I have now finished what I proposed on this subject, and though the account I have given you comes far short of the truth, yet what you have now heard, may, through the divine blessing, conduce to your real benefit. Were these truths thoroughly believed, and frequently

frequently considered, what a happy change would follow in the temper, conversation, and conduct of mankind! But alas, many neglect or forget them. I have somewhere read of an excellent preacher who described the awful solemnities of the final judgment with such pathetic strains of eloquence, and in a manner so moving, that some of his audience burst forth into loud exclamations, as if the Judge had himself appeared, announcing the decisive sentence. In the height of the commotion, the preacher bade them restrain their tears and cries; for he had one thing more to add, the most astonishing of all. It was this, That within a quarter of an hour, the impression of those great events which they now felt would vanish, and they would return home, unaffected by them, to those sensible objects that commonly engrossed their attention.—May the Lord God keep for ever the subject of which we have been treating in the imagination of the thoughts of your hearts, and cause it to bring forth the fruits of holy living; and to him, through Jesus Christ, be praise, and honour, and glory. *Amen.*

Thomas Turnbull, Printer,
Canongate, Edinburgh.